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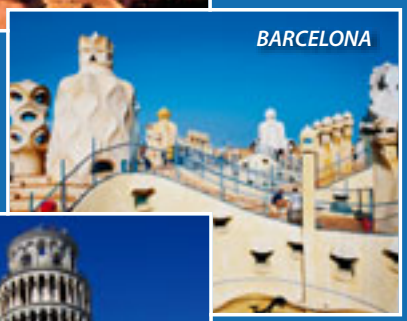

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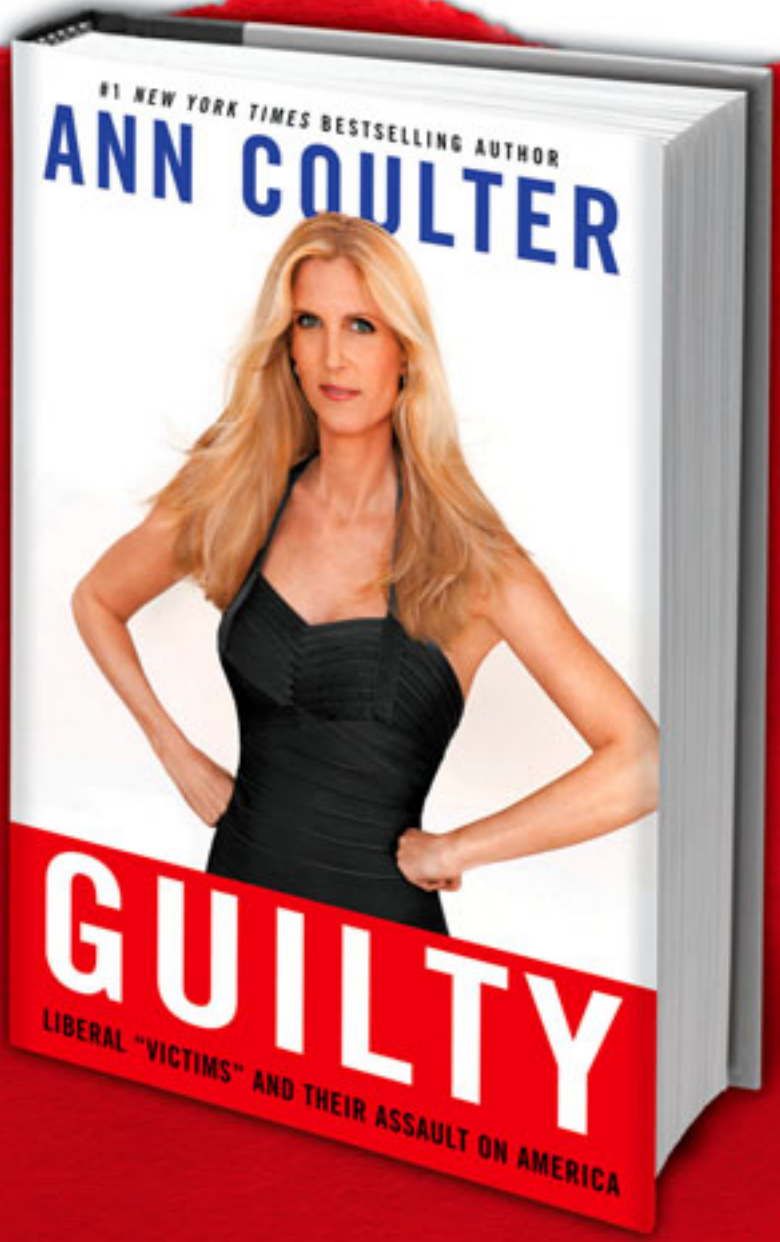

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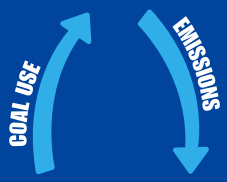

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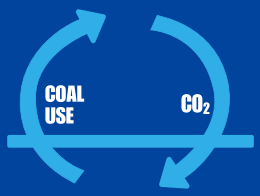

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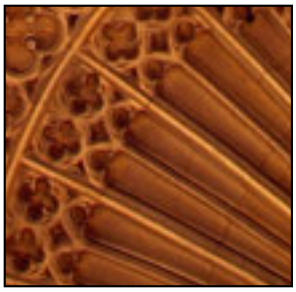

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Wake Us When It's Over

The Scrapbook finds itself in a minority of one here, but we'll say it anyway: We thought Barack Obama's inaugural address was surprisingly mediocre. Not as painful to listen to as Elizabeth Alexander's banal inaugural poem, or Joseph Lowery's embarrassing benediction ("when yellow will be mellow, when the red man can get ahead, man"?). But we're willing to wager that, a generation from now, schoolchildren won't be memorizing its memorable passages.

That's because there weren't any. It sounded like an address by the class valedictorian, the work of an inspired 27-year-old, augmented with suggestions from perennial hacks like Theodore Sorenson and Doris Kearns Goodwin. Which is exactly what it was. There were the usual soaring banalities ("Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real"), meaningless pronouncements ("We will restore science to its rightful place"), excruciating images ("We have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation"), obvious clichés ("For the world has changed, and we must change with it"), Hallmark moments ("America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity") and the wisdom of motivational speakers ("We understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned"). But there was very little ice cream beneath the topping.

It was also singularly ungracious in tone, intent on establishing Barack Obama's moral superiority over George W. Bush, and consciously misrepresenting the last eight years of history. It was sonorous, of course, and delivered with the new president's earnest pomposity; but as an oration, or rhetoric that will echo down the ages, it had all the staying power of a nominating speech at the Democratic National Convention.

And yet, to be fair, The Scrapbook acknowledges that it wasn't Obama's fault. Blame it on John F. Kennedy. His 1961 inaugural address, much admired in many quarters, broke ranks with its predecessors in important ways. It was short, which was virtuous; but it was also largely devoid of content, self-consciously theatrical, and pontificating to the core. And it established the pattern of the last half-century.

Kennedy began by noting the historic significance of his own election and swearing-in ("a celebration of freedom, symbolizing an end, as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as change") and slighting his elderly predecessor ("the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century"), and proceeded to a list of reckless promises ("we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe"), irritating parallelisms ("Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate"), divine sanction ("on earth God's work must truly be our own"), and biblical platitudes ("now the trumpet summons us again").

And Kennedy's successors have each tried, in turn, to reproduce the same Historic Themes, Silver-Tongued Tone, Grandiloquent Language, and Moving Imagery that will encompass not just All of American History, and Accumulated Global Wisdom, but the Long March of Humanity Through the Ages to—well, single-payer health care, or more aircraft carriers, or higher wages for teachers, take your pick.

Inaugural addresses before JFK were closer in form and tone to State of the Union speeches than the giant helium balloons sent aloft today. So here's The Scrapbook's modest wish: May our next president, whoever he/she may be, seek out Thomas Jefferson, or James Knox Polk, or Ike's Second Inaugural, for inspiration. ♦

What They Were Thinking

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, left, and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, at a ski slope outside the Black Sea resort of Sochi, southern Russia

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Big Breitbart

If history is any indication, *Big Hollywood* will soon be a must-click for political junkies of every persuasion. The new website (bighollywood.breitbart.com) was launched earlier this month by SCRAPBOOK friend Andrew Breitbart, who played major roles in launching the Drudge Report and the left-leaning *Huffington Post*—two of the world's most-trafficked websites covering politics and pop-culture.

With Big Hollywood, Breitbart hopes to advance a discussion on those issues from a right-of-center perspective. The site will bring together politicians, pundits, and interns with actors, directors, and key grips to talk about Hollywood and America—and those rare places these days where the two overlap. In kicking off the site, Breitbart wrote:

> Big Hollywood is not a "celebrity" gabfest or a gossip outpost—it is a continuous politics and culture posting board for those who think something has gone drastically wrong and that Hollywood should return to its patriotic roots.
>
> Big Hollywood's modest objective: to change the entertainment industry. To make Hollywood something we can believe in—again. In order to give millions of Americans hope.

Among the site's contributors: author and screenwriter Andrew Klavan; *National Review*'s Jonah Goldberg; the *Wall Street Journal*'s John Fund; MSNBC analyst Tucker Carlson; Fred Thompson; director David Zucker (*Airplane*, *The Naked Gun*); *Reason* editor in chief Nick Gillespie; screenwriter John Ridley (*Three Kings*); Hollywood box office analyst and ESPN radio host Steve Mason; former congressman John Kasich; and author/director Frank Miller (*300* and *Sin City*). ♦

Happy Ending

Two weeks ago in these pages, Jonathan V. Last reported on a conflict between the National Park Service, which is trying to build the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and Mike Svonavec, who owned the last important parcel of land needed for the project—including the six acres where the plane crashed ("The Fight Over Flight 93"). The Park Service claimed Svonavec was holding out; Svonavec claimed the Park Service was appraisal shopping to get his land on the cheap; and the Families of Flight 93 had asked the White House to get involved.

Just before midnight on January 16, Svonavec and the Park Service reached a binding agreement in which Svonavec signed his land over, and the NPS relinquished the appraisal of its value to a federal court.

It's unclear how much influence President Bush exerted. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne said the negotiations were a priority for Bush. The Families of Flight 93 thanked him for his personal involvement. Whatever the administration did, it seems to have worked out well for all concerned. After the deal was struck, Svonavec made sure to point out that he had not been strong-armed: "We were not forced into this," he said. "This is the methodology I think is the best for all concerned." ♦

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Casual

The Poet and his Muse

A good friend was planning a surprise party for her husband, also a good friend, and she asked me to contribute a poem to the celebration. Now, I was busy at work and behind schedule on two freelance assignments, which unlike this commission promised financial reward. But my ego is fragile and susceptible to compliment. And, oh, of all compliments, to be addressed as a poet, even by someone whose sole exposure to my work had come a few years back toward the end of a wine-filled dinner on the patio when I read to her and some other friends a single poem for laughs—but still, a poet!

I have been writing poetry since grammar school. In those days I would painstakingly type the poems out, fold them into an envelope, and give them to my mother for Christmas. My primary audience now is my wife Cynthia, who says she really likes my poems, though it's clear that what she likes even more is the simple fact that her husband writes them for her. My verse is of modest quality, unable to compete with the beauty of the gesture.

But Cynthia did not like the idea of my writing a poem for our friend's birthday, specifically the plan for me to read the poem aloud at the party. After I read to her a draft of the sonnet I was composing, she looked like she wanted to leave the room. "It's good," she said nervously, as if caught in a lie.

The poem did need work. And, granted, it's maybe eccentric or worse, egomaniacal, to go writing sonnets and foisting them on strangers at parties, insisting on being heard and applauded like some child carrying around his violin, asking everyone, "Wanna hear me play?" An unfair characterization of myself and this particular situation, perhaps, but to someone like my wife, who is decidedly not a ham, the idea of singing outside the shower is fraught with potential embarrassment. Even when she is not the one performing, she suffers vicarious stage fright.

HAL MAYFORTH

A few years ago, I asked some musician friends to bring instruments to play at our annual Christmas party. When I told her about it, the idea seemed to Cynthia so awful that she thought I was joking, until the joke became so realistically detailed as I made phone calls to confirm arrangements that she awoke to the facts of the matter and strenuously objected. Only then it was too late to call off the show, so music was performed and, please note, enjoyed. Fortunately, Cynthia survived, but we no longer include live music in our Christmas party program.

I decided not to press the matter of the birthday poem with her. Instead I approached a colleague, who as the former manager of a literary bookstore had participated in many a poetry reading. He had answers to all my questions. Need I practice my delivery? Yes, absolutely. Should I memorize the poem? Yes, though he suggested I also have a copy with me, to guard against losing my place and also to put the audience at ease. It is odd, we agreed, to read a sonnet at a birthday party, but it would be over-the-top to recite one from memory.

At the party, as everyone waited for Michelle to arrive with her husband, Pete, the birthday boy, I told another friend, a perfectly dressed lawyer who always wears a smirk, about the plan for me to deliver a poem. I thought he would make some scathing remark, but his reaction was kind and welcoming. I asked him to do me a favor. "The last word of the poem is 'brother,'" I said. "When you hear it, start clapping so everyone knows I am done."

A little later, Michelle called the party to attention and made a very sweet toast to Pete, who still seemed battered by the gentle shock of finding 30 friends, many of them from out of town, waylaying him in a restaurant. Then, with little explanation, Michelle introduced me. I said I had chosen to write a sonnet because sonnets are short. And just 14 lines later, it was over. The applause began on cue. Pete had enjoyed the poem, and he came over to thank me.

I looked around the room and was glad to see that the party's friendly, easygoing vibe had not been damaged by the intrusion of poetry. Guests moved on to refill their wine glasses, but among the partygoers' faces I did not see Cynthia's. I eventually found her—my wife, my most important audience—quietly seated against a wall in the back, smiling with relief. Sounding truthful this time, she said, "It was good."

David Skinner

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the weekly Standard

Let 1,000 Republican Flowers Bloom

The ceremonies, unity, and patriotism of Inauguration week were nice. The bloviating, fawning, and gushing from celebrities and the media were a bit much. It's not surprising that we are beginning to hear expressions of frustration from the Republican grass roots, and exhortations to action: "Why can't the Republican congressional leadership get its act together? Where's the coherent message? What's the strategy? Why the disunity? Who's going to lead us out of the wilderness?"

To which the answers are: Calm down and be careful what you wish for.

Calm down because Obama has just become president and the ball is in his court. There are severe limits to what the GOP can do over the next couple of months. In fact, Republicans might be better off doing nothing at all. Since Election Day, the GOP has been nowhere to be seen and Obama's popularity has soared, but the Democrats' edge over the Republicans in the generic congressional ballot of the Rasmussen poll hasn't increased at all.

George W. Bush, the leader of the party—and, let's face it, of conservatives—for the last eight years, has only just left town. Fairly or unfairly (mostly unfairly), he ended up a very unpopular guy. It's going to take a while for Republicans to shake free of the Bush effect. And, more important, to shake free of the fact that for the last 14 years, and 26 of the last 28, there's been a Republican president in the White House and/or Republican control of Congress.

That's why one has to be careful about what one wishes for. Republicans, newly liberated, need to resist calls to shackle themselves to prematurely announced agendas and already anointed leaders. This is the time for a thousand Republicans to bloom. Congressmen used to looking to the White House for guidance or approval—or fearing disapprobation—should show some healthy ambition and unleash their inner policy entrepreneur. Backbenchers need to come forward with heterodox ideas. There should be vigorous debate. Disharmonious disarray is in the short term much less of a danger than a false and stultifying unity.

Everyone looks back nostalgically to 1993-94, the last time Republicans were out of power, but that example is a bit misleading. In 1992, Clinton had won only 43 percent of the vote, and the Republicans had gained congressional seats. The successful Reagan years remained fresh in voters' minds. The task was simply to reclaim and revivify the Reagan agenda. The task today is both harder and less well defined.

The situation is more like 1977. For one thing, given the unlikelihood of Republicans taking back Congress in 2010, it requires a four-year horizon rather than a two-year one. More important, it requires serious rethinking in fundamental areas. Consider how far the party moved from 1977 to 1980. It was a period of vigorous, even hectic, political, policy, and institutional entrepreneurship, among conservatives both old and new. Thanks to the controversial efforts of backbenchers like Jack Kemp and Bill Steiger, the party rejected green eyeshade budget-balancing and embraced pro-growth supply-side economic policies. Thanks to the emergence of the neoconservatives, Kissingerian détente gave way to Reaganite freedom-fighting. Religious conservatives moved en masse to join the ranks of the GOP. All of this in four years.

This happened through an unruly mix of debate—in magazines and op-ed pages as well as in Congress and the states—through a host of uncoordinated legislative initiatives, most of which went nowhere but some of which took off, and through uncoordinated, often ad hoc, reactions to the Carter administration and developments around the world.

If party leaders and ideological guides had succeeded in buttoning everything down, if there had been harmonious unity and a coordinated strategy and an agreed-upon message in early 1977, there would have been no Reagan Revolution. And if politicians—or for that matter pundits—had been deterred from changing their minds, worried over charges of inconsistency, there would have been less progress during those years. When you're out of power after having been in power for a long time and when there are new realities requiring fresh thinking, a foolish consistency really is the hobgoblin of little minds. Or at least politically unsuccessful ones.

So a little chaos, lots of debate, tons of political entrepreneurship—that's what we need.

—*William Kristol*

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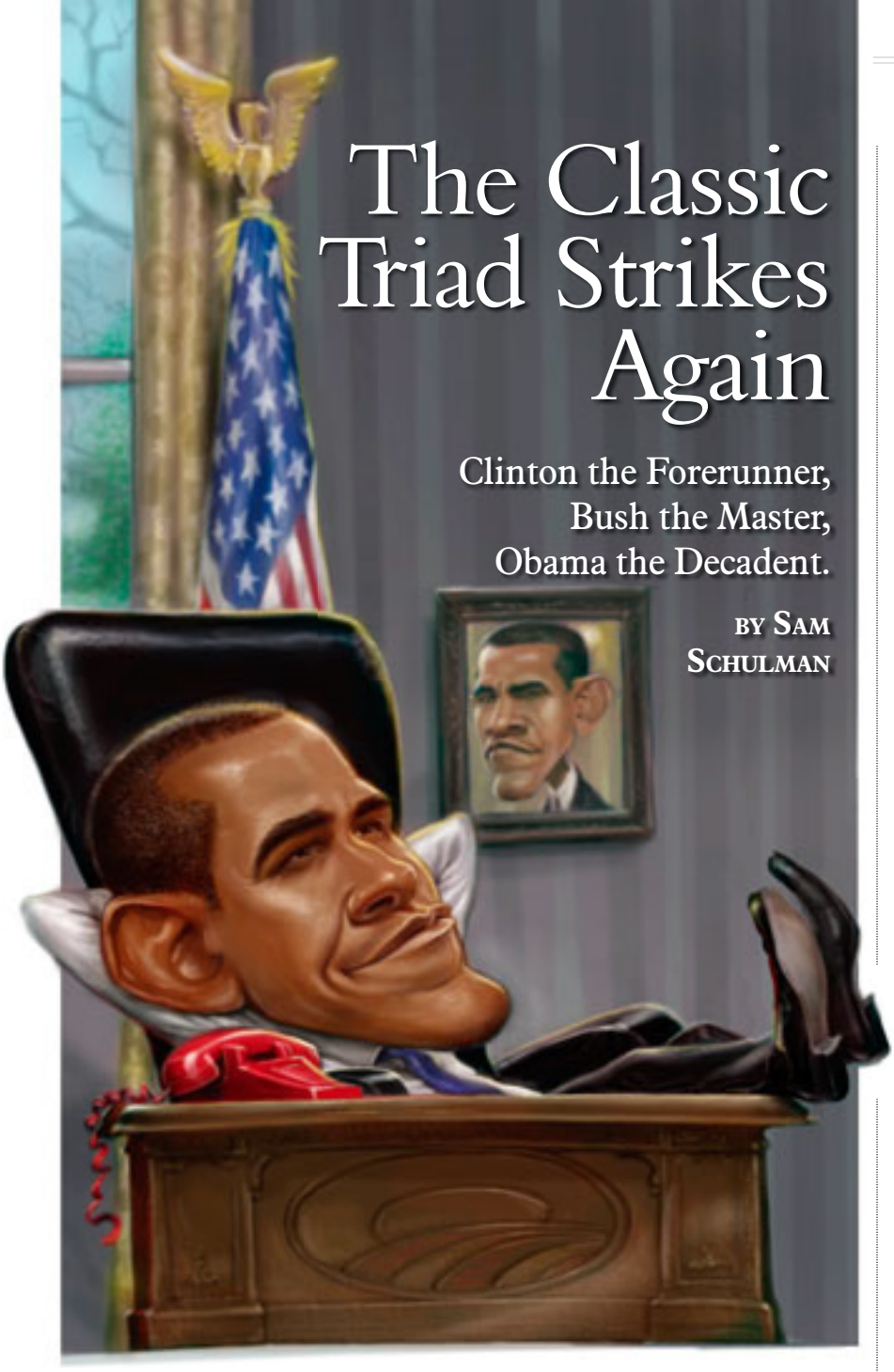

The Classic Triad Strikes Again

Clinton the Forerunner, Bush the Master, Obama the Decadent.

BY SAM SCHULMAN

Lincoln or Reagan? TR or Ike? Washington or Wilson? Camelot or Campobello? Offshore oil drilling may be stalled for the duration, but nothing can stop the round-the-clock mining of clichés and the deep-earth probes in search of historical metaphors for President Obama. Journalists are running three shifts in quest for original models, new figures of speech, and fresh paradigms to express the nobility, brilliance, novelty, cool, and cunning of a president who—if I may coin a phrase—is still only in the first hundred hours of his administration.

The effort is straining America's cranial infrastructure. Christopher Hitchens dusted off the word "hepcat" to describe Obama. E.J. Dionne must have awakened in horror one morning last week—had he really reminded readers that Obama is fond of the word "audacity"? And Maureen Dowd—well, to quote anything she published during inauguration week would hardly be the act of a gentleman. Four more years spent shouldering the Obama burden will mark the bodies of our best writers in dreadful ways. Pastor Warren must pray on behalf of their families and their dust-jacket photographers.

So in the new spirit of solidarity with the suffering, I offer freely to these heroes a fresh face to fasten on Obama—though not a pretty one: Michael R. Bloomberg. Obama must soon reveal himself as the Bloomberg of presidents—depending uncomfortably but inescapably upon the achievement of his predecessor Bush while avoiding the mistakes of Bush's predecessor Clinton, just as Bloomberg must do with Rudy Giuliani and Ed Koch.

An unlovely and unlovable mayor and our adorable new president: an odd comparison, but one that describes the limits and possibilities of an Obama presidency more precisely than any metaphor that Will or Wieseltier might happen upon. Koch, Giuliani, and Bloomberg form a classic triad of human achievement: the Forerunner, the Master, and the Decadent. Among Greek tragedians, Ed, Rudy, and Mike are played by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Among the Elizabethan dramatic geniuses, Marlowe is Koch, Shakespeare is Giuliani, and Ben Jonson is Bloomberg. In "Music Appreciation" class, we were once taught the three Bs: Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. Among Italian movie directors: Rossellini, Fellini, Visconti. Among sacred books: Torah, Gospel, Koran.

The three mayors exemplify this pattern beautifully. Ed, the forerunner of reform: His methods are primitive, his manner is experimental, his effect futile. Rudy: the outwardly supreme but inwardly tortured master craftsman who actually seized control of the city and transformed it for its citizens. Mike: the decadent smoothie, a middle-of-the-road Democrat who rode into an office transformed by the efforts of the unpopular Rudy. Mike ignores Rudy, but he remains—so

Sam Schulman, a writer in Virginia, is publishing director of the American.

GARY LOCKE

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far—successful and adequately popular by keeping the situation for New Yorkers only a little worse—so far—than Rudy left it.

Koch, for all his failures, made Giuliani possible. Taking control of the city after a near-financial collapse, Koch discerned in the mists the path that his successor actually walked. Despite Koch's realism and tough-mindedness, and his willingness to burn bridges with his former left-wing supporters, he proved to his contemporaries that the city was ungovernable. When, after three terms, the voters replaced him with David Dinkins, a true left purist, it hardly made a difference in the lives of those of us who lived there.

From the ashes emerged the master. Giuliani accomplished all that Koch promised, and never asking, "How'm I doing?" Giuliani set about making the streets and homes of the city safe for those who lived there—most particularly for the poor. His public order policies—snarlingly publicized—made life for ordinary New Yorkers almost unimaginably better. In every year since he took office, at least a thousand citizens have been spared a violent death, an equal number have been saved from becoming murderers, and for every murder prevented, perhaps fifty or a hundred relatives and friends are saved from grief, fear, and bitterness. Rudy's achievement allowed New Yorkers to take as normal a level of civility in urban life.

In the wake of 9/11, Mike Bloomberg took over. Observe him, Mr. President. He moved first to restore the reputation and likability of the mayor's office by sitting down and talking to the community leaders whom Giuliani scorned for being unrepresentative. He also noisily ordered uncourageous "crackdowns" on harmless practices with no discernible victims and no discernible advocates: smoking in restaurant bars and consuming trans fats. He refused to reduce the size of the city's immense workforce, proclaiming that living and doing business in the city should be a luxury for the discerning. Bloomberg's single Giulianiesque accomplishment—replacing the old school board with a new blue-ribbon entity—has made scant difference to the children forced to remain in the city's public education system.

All Mike's noise made for popularity with the *New York Times*-reading classes. But one thing would never be permitted him. Bloomberg made sure not to weaken the public-safety regime in such a way that it would send the murder rate up. The result is that, gradually, Bloomberg has donned Giuliani's reputation for making New York safe—but without summoning up charges of racism and police brutality. Having done the tough and unpopular work that made the Bloomberg regime possible, Rudy has been discarded.

President Obama is in much the same lucky but precarious position—and has a similar relationship to his two predecessors. Obama's first avatar, Bill Clinton, was as noisy as Koch but was an indolent president—a forerunner. Like Koch, he was a big personality with a small list of accomplishments, and his term ended in recession, a futile war, and unavenged attacks against American forces that prepared the way for 9/11.

To Clinton's Koch, Bush played Giuliani. Bush's successes took too long to achieve by the political clock, but the ultimate result was safety at home since 9/11, the defeat of two of our most potent enemies on the battlefield of Iraq (Saddam and al Qaeda both), and an improvement in the lives of non-Saddamist, non-Islamist Iraqis that far exceeded Giuliani's improvement in New York City. Had Bush been quicker to find a strategy for victory (in the teeth of ferocious opposition, much of it opportunistic, much of it demanding an impossible perfection, all of it unwise), he might have turned his attention to reforming the financial system in his second term. That's just what he did, of course, but his efforts were easily outmaneuvered.

Like Bloomberg succeeding Giuliani, Obama inherits a far better hand than Bush had done. The worst is over. The disasters happened in the last September of the last year of both Giuliani's and Bush's terms. Like Bloomberg, Obama will find it easy to adopt a style of governing that is less challenging to the opinion-making classes than his predecessors.

But there is one terrifying exception to Obama's easy pathway to esteem. Obama can do whatever he wants as long as domestic security remains merely Bush-perfect. Bloomberg knows he may raise taxes, drive jobs out of town, indulge his health fads, but only so long as the murder toll never rises above, say, 699. Just as New Yorkers now read about a Central Park mugging on the front page, Americans have come to believe that our freedom from more terrorist attacks is normal. Pity Bloomberg and Obama for a moment—for they know there is nothing normal or easy about the security achievements of the despised masters they have succeeded.

Obama and Bloomberg sit on the horns of a dilemma. In every way but this, they needn't actually outdo the masters they have succeeded as long as they govern with style (like Brahms in his music and Visconti in his films). Obama beat Bush with taxes, interrogation, and Guantánamo. He has hired not ideologues but cynical operators to manage the crucial economic and military tasks of his administration. Geithner and Holder, each of them with a proven record of moral pliancy, can be relied on to do what is necessary, even if it means keeping taxes low, interrogations harsh, and some equivalent to Guantánamo in business. Behind the scenes, such men will ensure the Obama administration's clock will still run on "Giuliani time," while in press conferences Obama can act as Bloomberg.

In his ungracious inaugural address, Obama spent a lot of energy outlining his moral superiority to the defeated man to whom he owes so much. With an admiring audience before them, decadent smoothies like Bloomberg and Obama really can get away with murder. Fortunately for us, Bloomberg and Obama also know that they can't permit the actual murder of large numbers of their audience. Or so I hope. ♦

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The Republicans' Best Weapon

It's Obama himself.

BY FRED BARNES

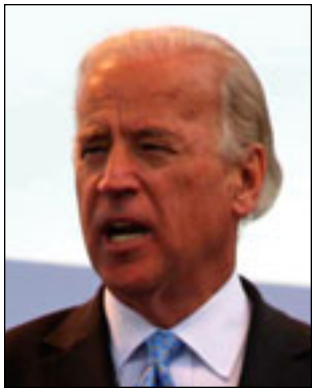
In 1994, congressional Republicans carried laminated copies of their Contract With America (tax cuts, term limits, etc.) in their pockets. They may now want to laminate President Obama's inaugural address and carry it around.

This is not as silly as it sounds. Republican leaders believe the speech pleased them more than it did House speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate majority leader Harry Reid. Obama's "new era of responsibility" echoed the "Personal Responsibility Act," the third of the ten planks in the Contract With America. Obama also said that it's not the size of government which matters but whether it works. Newt Gingrich coined that thought years ago. Obama lauded "risk-takers." Democrats want to tax them to death.

For the foreseeable future, attacking Obama will be counterproductive for Republicans. He's both enormously popular and the bearer of moral authority as the first African-American president. So the idea is for Republicans to make Obama an ally by using his words, from the inaugural address and speeches and interviews, against Democrats and their initiatives in Congress.

Obama is for bipartisanship. Pelosi, Reid, and their cohort are heavyhanded partisans with no interest in accommodating Republicans. Obama favors transparency. They don't. Obama says he wants "to spend wisely" and promises that "programs will end" if they don't work. That's hardly the philosophy of congressional Democrats.

Obama's words may be bromides or boilerplate that bear little relationship to his true sentiments or real plans. But so what? Republicans in the House and Senate are a badly outnumbered minority. They have few political weapons at their disposal. Citing Obama's words makes political sense. It's at least worth a try. Republicans have nothing to lose.



Biden and Mankiw

It might even get Republicans some attention. For the mainstream media, Obama is the only story in Washington. Most reporters are indifferent to the excesses of one-party, Democratic rule on Capitol Hill. But the argument that Democrats are out of sync with Obama, if repeated often enough, might get some traction.

Republicans are already using it against the $850 billion economic stimulus package drafted by congressional Democrats and tentatively accepted at the White House as Obama's program. Republicans complained they'd been shut out. Indeed they had been, their input ignored. Obama listened to Republican leaders at a bipartisan meeting at the White House last week and scheduled a session this week with House Republican whip Eric Cantor.

Republicans exploited two other weapons at their disposal. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell got a copy of the Congressional Budget Office's analysis of the Democratic bill. It wasn't a formal CBO report, wasn't set for public release, and never appeared on the office's website. But McConnell leaked it to the Associated Press, whose story appeared a few hours before Obama was inaugurated. The AP story began, "It will take years before an infrastructure spending program proposed by President-elect Obama will boost the economy, according to congressional economists."

The $274 billion for infrastructure had been billed as the job-creating, economy-stimulating part of the bill. But only 7 percent of the money would be spent in 2009 and less than $4 billion in highway construction funds would hit the economy before September 2010.

Democrats were sufficiently embarrassed to start tinkering with the bill and move more spending into 2009. And Peter Orszag, the new White House budget director, noted that 75 percent of the $850 billion will now be spent this year. But most of that money—$166 billion to bail out state governments, for instance—won't produce jobs or goose the economy.

The other weapon that aided Republicans was the conservative intellectual community, particularly economists. Amity Shlaes's book on the failure of the New Deal to revive the economy, *The Forgotten Man*, was widely read by Republicans in Washington. So were her compelling articles on that subject in mainstream newspapers.

Free market economists (some of them surprisingly engaging writers) raised doubts about the Democratic stimulus scheme. Greg Mankiw of

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Harvard tore apart Joe Biden's claim that "every economist, as I've said, from conservative to liberal, acknowledges that direct government spending on a direct program now is the best way to infuse economic growth and create jobs." Mankiw ticked off a list of well-known economists who don't believe that, including Gary Becker, Robert Barro, Robert Lucas, Eugene Fama, and Mankiw himself. "I am sure there are many others as well," he wrote. True. There's Kevin Hassett of the American Enterprise Institute, for one.

Republicans might well have invoked Obama when Democrats pulled off an egregious act of partisanship on the State Children's Health Insurance Program, aka S-chip. Last year, Democrats and Republicans reached a compromise on S-chip, and it cleared the finance committee, 17-4. President Bush ultimately vetoed the bill.

Without consulting Republicans, Democrats drafted a new bill several weeks ago, stripping out the relatively minor items that had made S-chip acceptable to Republicans. These included a waiting period for children of immigrants and a measure to limit the number of children lured off private insurance. S-chip not only got more expensive, but children from families in New York and New Jersey earning more than 300 percent of the poverty line ($66,150 for a family of four) would now be eligible.

Expanding S-chip is one of Obama's top priorities. If he's unhappy with the way the new bill was put together, he hasn't said so. That may be because Republicans haven't yelled loudly enough to make it an issue. They should. Democrats may regard bipartisanship as unnecessary. But the public loves it.

The point isn't that S-chip could be stopped. That's not likely. And a laminated copy of Obama's inaugural would be too unwieldy to carry around. No, the point is that Republicans in Congress aren't helpless or powerless. They can make the best of a bad situation. And who knows? The situation might get better. ♦

More to It Than Meets the Eye

The hidden coherence of Obama's recovery plan.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

It grieves me to say so, but President Obama's conservative critics just don't get it. The new president has put forward a plan for economic recovery that is more coherent than they are willing to admit. Start with the stimulus package of some $825 billion. A lot of money, more even than George W. Bush's $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program, but not much more as money is counted these days, especially as Obama's will be spent over two or three years. Critics complain that stimulus spending will add to the swollen federal debt. True: President Bush did leave his successor a $1.2 trillion annual deficit. To which Obama will add about $400 billion per year. Query: What empirical evidence is there that deficits of $1.6 trillion are more harmful during a period of economic recession than deficits of $1.2 trillion?

True, too, such deficits might in the long run make foreigners worry about holding onto dollars and Treasury IOUs, which would trigger a bout of sales of Treasury bills and notes, and drive interest rates up to recovery-squashing levels. But so far, so good, as the man who jumped from the Empire State Building shouted at the 50th floor. The dollar has not sold off for two simple reasons. First, where is a seeker-after-safety in this troubled world likely to find a safer haven than the U.S. currency? Second, China and other holders of trillions in our dollars and dollar-denominated assets are not eager to start dumping their holdings on the market, a move that would drive down the value of their remaining dollar assets.

Conservatives have also jumped on the report by the Congressional Budget Office that about half of the planned $355 billion in infrastructure spending will not occur until after the 2011 fiscal year starts on October 1, 2010. True. But if—and this is a big if—the projects to be funded have a net social value, that is, are likely to yield net returns to society for decades to come, they should be built whether part of a stimulus package or not. The objection should not be to the construction of the projects, but to the assumption that they cannot be built by the private sector, given proper incentives. Toll roads, schools financed with vouchers, health care facilities selected by patients and paid for with health care vouchers—all are possible, but all are off the Obama radar screen.

Democrats are, in the end, Democrats after all, and unlikely to be swayed by such as Harvard economics professor Robert Barro, who pointed out in last week's *Wall Street Journal* that it might be better to "emphasize instead reductions in marginal income tax rates." But the need for the projects themselves is in no way diminished if they get built next year, or the year after that, so long as they "pass muster from the perspective of cost-benefit analysis," to use Barro's—and Larry Summers's—test. Whether the Harvard crowd will be able to persuade Nancy Pelosi, Barney Frank, Charlie Rangel and other key Democrats that they have it right is another matter.

In fact, there is something to be said for the postponement of the expenditures. The Great Depression was

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characterized by a modest recovery, followed by a relapse when monetary and fiscal policy were tightened, a so-called "W" pattern. The postponement of some of the stimulus spending into the out years, coming at a time when the economy is healing but still vulnerable to a relapse, might, just might, turn that "W" into a "V" and provide the juice to keep the upswing moving along.

That leaves open the question of whether we are living in a fool's paradise, like the chap at the 50th floor. Here is where the hidden coherence of the Obama plan shows itself, in a two-part fiscal and monetary policy strategy.

When the time comes to unwind the stimulus, and finally slow the Fed's keep-the-presses rolling monetary policy, Obama is counting on two developments. The first is a grand bargain to bring the potentially budget-busting entitlements programs under control. The president plans to convene a "fiscal responsibility" panel before he presents his first budget to the Congress, and then move on to an attack on the unsustainable projected costs of Medicare, which is a far bigger problem than getting the Social Security system on a firm footing.

The outlines of a health care deal seem obvious. The cost of Medicare can be cut by a means-tested system of copayments, to prevent the current overuse of the system by patients for whom a visit to the doctor or some optional procedure has no cost. Friends living among their retired colleagues in Florida tell me that folks in their community often schedule an away-day to include a visit to some doctor, perhaps en route to a movie. That health care, when it's a free good to the user, is overconsumed should come as no surprise.

The copayments will probably be used to fund health care benefits of some sort for lower-income workers now without adequate insurance. Never mind what you think of such a plan, or any of the others that will emerge from the fertile mind of health care czar Tom Daschle. The point is that if Obama succeeds in reducing the level of spending now built into the entitlements system, he will have the cake he has eaten—deficit-increasing stimulus spending—followed by deficit-reducing entitlement reform. A return to the fiscal probity long since abandoned by a Republican administration.

Meanwhile, back at the Fed, either Ben Bernanke or Larry Summers, if by then the latter has been moved over into the chairman's chair (you'll know when sighs of relief erupt from White House staffers, and groans from the Fed boardroom), will be implementing the exit strategy Bernanke laid out in his speech at the London School of Economics, not exactly a bastion of conservative economic thought. "Put out the fire first and then think about the fire code," he said. The steps he has taken to use the Fed's balance sheet to take on troubled assets, bail out banks and insurers—these put out the fire that would have consumed the financial system in America, and most probably in the world. When the fire is out, and the economy chugging along, the excess liquidity can be siphoned off by selling Treasury bonds in return for cash, which will by that route be withdrawn from circulation. At that time, with a recovery underway, the banks will presumably want to pay back the loans they have accepted under rather onerous terms. Also, money that has been lent to banks or used to prop up the commercial paper market on which so many businesses rely has been made available under short-term contracts. Allow them to expire, the extra cash disappears, inflation is slain. And if the timing is exquisitely right, the cash will be withdrawn gradually, in pace with the unfolding recovery.

Sounds like a wonderful exit strategy, from a central banker in whom we have reason, given his performance during this financial crisis, to have confidence. But withhold the cheers until taking a look at Robert Samuelson's *The Great Inflation*, which describes how difficult it is for vote-seeking politicians to rein in inflation, and for central bankers to take away the punch bowl in sufficient time to prevent the party from becoming raucous, to borrow from William McChesney Martin, who served as chairman of the Fed under five presidents, from 1951 to 1970.

There you have it. Spend now, cut taxes now, and run deficits now. Build stuff that has a positive social value. Maintain faith in the currency by brokering a grand bargain to bring entitlement spending and therefore post-recession deficits under control. At the right time, call in all that extra cash that is sloshing around, thereby preventing inflation. And all will be well in this best of all possible worlds.

That, at least, is the theory of the Obama brain trust. But if hyper-spending by government freezes out at as much or more private-sector investment; if consumers, seeing tax increases in their future, rein in spending even more; if the government cannot impose its cost-benefit test on politically directed infrastructure spending—then Obama will not have kept his head when conservatives about him lost theirs.

Obama might have it wrong, just as many of his critics say Franklin Roosevelt had it wrong. But nitpicking around the edges of this recovery program won't be enough either to derail or to lay the basis for a "we told you so" campaign in 2010 or 2012. That will take a coherent counter-proposal. ♦

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What a Difference a Day Makes

Obama starts out a tiny bit less doctrinaire on abortion than Clinton. BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Barack Obama was supposed to make his first presidential foray into the culture wars last Thursday, January 22, by signing an executive order that would please the pro-abortion lobby. He didn't.

January 22 is the anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that effectively created a right to abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. Because of its symbolic significance, it's also the day when the new president signs executive orders dealing with abortion-related issues such as the "Mexico City policy," a ban on federal funds to overseas groups that perform or promote abortions. Bill Clinton repealed that Reagan-era policy on January 22, 1993, and George W. Bush reinstated it on January 22, 2001.

But with over 100,000 people marching on Washington that day to protest *Roe* v. *Wade*, President Obama simply issued a statement affirming his support for "a woman's right to choose" and his desire to "reduce the need for abortion." *Time* magazine senior editor Amy Sullivan called it "an interesting and important decision" not to issue the executive order on that "politically-charged day." The Christian Broadcasting Network's David Brody got "the sense that the Obama administration wants to at least set a new tone and move the discussion toward the need to reduce abortion."

And then, late in the afternoon on Friday, January 23—without coverage by the media—Obama quietly signed the executive order repealing the Mexico City policy. In substance, he gave the abortion lobby exactly what it wanted. But by waiting 24 hours, he also received credit—from Pat Robertson's media outfit, no less—for setting a "new tone" for the abortion debate.

Douglas Johnson, chief strategist at the National Right to Life Committee, warned against reading too much into this gesture. Johnson fully expects the Obama administration to "advance a sweeping pro-abortion agenda. They will do it piece by piece. The executive order on Mexico City is important, but that's just the first shot."

While the media spent much of December and January chattering about the selection of mega-church pastor Rick Warren to deliver the inaugural invocation, Obama was quietly filling his administration with members of the abortion lobby. NARAL's former legal director, Dawn Johnsen, will serve as assistant attorney general for the Office of Legal Counsel. Secretary of Health and Human Services-designate Tom Daschle, who led the fight in the Senate against the ban on partial-birth abortion, will help devise the health care plan, which Obama promised would cover abortions. Melody Barnes, a onetime Planned Parenthood board member, left her job at the left-wing Center for American Progress to serve as the director of the White House Domestic Policy Council. Ellen Moran left her job as executive director of Emily's List, a pro-choice political action committee, to head the White House communications team. And just in case pro-choicers still doubted whether they had the president's ear, Michelle Obama's chief of staff, Jackie Norris, was once a Planned Parenthood board member too.

With an administration chock-full of pro-choice officials and with overwhelming Democratic majorities in Congress, any prospect of thwarting the abortion lobby's agenda might seem dim. Yet National Right to Life's Johnson thinks the first big fight over abortion in Congress is one that pro-lifers can win.

Groups like NARAL and Planned Parenthood have asked Obama to repeal the Hyde amendment, a law on the books since 1976 that prevents taxpayer funding of abortions for Medicaid recipients. The year before it went into effect, the federal government paid for 300,000 abortions. "There's going to be a firestorm if they try to disturb this policy that's now been in effect for some 33 years," said Johnson. Polls show that more than 60 percent of voters oppose federally funding abortions.

Although Democrats have 257 seats in the House and the Republicans 178, Representative Chris Smith, a Republican pro-life stalwart from New Jersey, points out that when the attempt to repeal the Hyde amendment failed in 1993, Democrats controlled the House 259 to 176. Still, there hasn't been a roll call vote on the Hyde amendment since 1997. Smith says, "We're close. We could win it. We won't know until it's tested. We also have filibuster capabilities in the Senate."

In all likelihood, the Hyde amendment can be saved only with the help of Democrats. In the Senate, where it takes 41 votes to sustain a filibuster, there are only 38 Republicans who oppose federal funding of abortions. At least 8 Democrats in the Senate have voted against federal funding in the past, but the big question is whether three of them would buck their party.

In an interview, the executive director of Democrats for Life of America, Kristen Day, declined to call on Democrats in the Senate to filibuster any bill that would fund abortions (although her group is firmly opposed to public funding). "It's hard to say

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what strategy we'll use—that would be one option, to filibuster it, but we should work to make sure it doesn't have an opportunity to come up for a vote," she said. "I just know that Senator Casey and Senator Nelson are going to do everything they can to make sure this won't come up."

Democrats Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and Ben Nelson of Nebraska both have strong pro-life voting records, but both have declined to endorse a filibuster of bills providing federal funds for abortion. At the Democratic National Convention last summer, Casey told The Weekly Standard, "I'm not going to make prognostications about legislative strategies on this or any other issue." Ben Nelson's spokesman Jake Thompson wrote in an email that the senator "is strongly opposed to abortion and has voted consistently that way." Thompson added he doesn't know if Nelson would filibuster abortion funding, saying that the senator "generally opposes obstruction."

Chris Smith argued that if Obama signs any measures providing for taxpayer-funded abortions—whether through Medicaid or his health care plan—he will open himself to charges of hypocrisy. Noted Smith, "It flies in the face of what Obama said about wanting to reduce abortions." Even his own vice president, Joe Biden, said as recently as 2007 on *Meet the Press* that he opposed public funding because it would affirmatively "promote" abortion, rather than merely permit it.

There will likely be many other clashes over abortion during Obama's presidency—on pro-life conscience clauses, embryonic stem cell research, parental consent laws, and perhaps even attempts to codify *Roe* v. *Wade* as a federal law. But a confrontation over the Hyde amendment will probably come up first because the amendment must be attached—or unattached—to each year's Health and Human Services appropriations bill.

President Obama may want to defuse the politics of abortion, but nothing would reignite them faster than a bitter congressional fight over the Hyde amendment. ♦

Inauguration Day, 2009

The Sermon on the Mall

God and man in the Obama White House.

BY TERRY EASTLAND

Barack Obama is the most religious Democratic president since Jimmy Carter. In announcing his campaign two years ago in Springfield, Illinois, he explicitly declared his Christian faith, and on the stump he regularly described himself as "a devout Christian." He made "religious outreach" a key part of his campaign, hiring aides to act as political missionaries to Catholics and evangelical Protestants. He addressed the proper role of religion in public life and made plain that his own faith affects every area of his life, including his politics and policies.

So just how will considerations of religion, including his own beliefs, affect his presidency? How will they influence policy and politics? How will they bear on his execution of office? Because it constitutes the formal introduction to his presidency, Obama's inaugural speech is worth reading with these questions in mind.

The text for Obama's speech was taken from I Corinthians. "In the words of Scripture," he said, "the time has come to set aside childish things." For Obama, it's our indul-

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gence of "childish things" that largely explains the present crisis. While his list of childish things included what from a pulpit would be called sin—he noted that the badly weakened economy is in part "a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some"—it consisted mostly of items that "have strangled our politics," rendering us unable to "make hard choices and prepare the nation" for the future. Repeating what he said often during the campaign, Obama referred to "conflict and discord" in our politics, "petty grievances and false promises," "stale political arguments," "recriminations and worn out dogmas."

Obama wants us to rise above all of that—and be adults. And from the perspective of his inaugural speech, that's how he regards his election—as America's choosing to set aside childish things and assume the responsibilities of adulthood in which he will lead in carrying them out.

For Obama, acting like adults is the first step toward a politics that reaffirms, as he put it in his speech, "the greatness of our nation." Yes, Obama is a national greatness type. He is also, not incidentally, an earthly Kingdom of God advocate: He told a congregation in South Carolina before that state's primary last year that he was confident "we can create a Kingdom [of God] right here on earth." Obama said that greatness "must be earned." And so we must work, a lot: "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. For everywhere we look there is work to be done."

Obama provided a nonexhaustive list of this work, from creating new jobs to building roads and bridges, electric grids, and digital lines, to "restoring science to its rightful place," to raising the quality while lowering the cost of health care, to harnessing the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories, to transforming our schools and colleges and universities. And that was just the work inside our borders.

There would seem little doubt that faith undergirds Obama's call to the nation. The first president not to have grown up in a Christian household, Obama became a Christian when he found a church—Trinity United—that shared his belief in social change. At the time he was engaged as a community organizer trying to remake a small patch of America (on the south side of Chicago). His belief in social change was secular, while the church's was religious. And in time he came to accept the latter view.

As Obama wrote in his 2006 book, *The Audacity of Hope*, "I was able to see faith was more than just a comfort to the weary or a hedge against death; rather, it was an active palpable agent in the world." Deeds—active and palpable actions of faith—are essential in this understanding of Christianity, more than creeds or confessions, which Obama seldom talks about.

At the close of his inaugural, Obama undertook to explain why we could be confident that we can remake America. Obama said "our confidence" lies in "the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny." Here Obama was attempting to preach civil religion; such religion draws on biblical terms and imagery to interpret the American experience, and Obama has professed to be a student of it. But this assurance of our confidence was not so assuring. Not everyone has the knowledge he described. And it's not exactly inspiring to portray God as one who calls on us to do work that takes us we know not where. Presumably God is not around after making that call. He's not there guiding and helping us to shape our destiny. We are alone.

This is a good example of Obama the Doubter. Doubt is a big part of his faith. "Faith doesn't mean you don't have doubts," he wrote in *Audacity*, and Obama's doubts are apparently such that he is unwilling to posit, as have so many of his predecessors, a providential God whose ways we can trust, who helps in time of need. In his doubt, by the way, Obama is George W. Bush's opposite. Bush was accused of having a "theology of certainty" on account of his saying such things as, from his first inaugural: "I know this [a nation of justice and opportunity] is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image."

In the speech's very last sentence, Obama again mentioned God:

> Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested, we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and *God's grace upon us*, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

The sentence is about us, and how we are to be perceived generations hence, but it points a finger to heaven to indicate that we have God's favor as we do our work. Here Obama, notwithstanding his own doubting faith, may have felt the need to buck up an audience that just minutes earlier was told it was making a lonely journey of indeterminate outcome. The passage doesn't explain why God favors us, but it would seem to be because we are doing God's work here on earth, a standard trope in our civil religion.

The surprise of Obama's speech was the lack of any explicit reference to the Golden Rule, which is found in the Bible and is essentially a way of restating the Second Great Commandment, which is, of course, to love your neighbor as yourself. The Golden Rule is the essence of Obama's social ethic. He believes that it should influence policy and politics. It has parallels in other religious traditions and thus is not exclusive to any one. It has secular parallels, too.

During the campaign Obama talked about the ethic in a variety of ways (often using "I am my brother's keeper," from Genesis 4, and the need to "help the least of these," from Matthew 25). Obama employed it to discuss what he called the nation's "empathy gap" and "empathy deficit." Maybe Obama didn't talk about the ethic in his inaugural because it was also Bush's ethic—recall in his first inaugural how Bush pledged the nation to a goal: "When we see that

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wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side." But neighbor-love is so central to Obama's politics that it's safe to predict we'll hear about it soon enough.

Obama quoted Scripture about setting aside childish things in order to mark the nation's transition to "a new era of responsibility." In this era, he said, the question we must ask

> is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works—whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end.

Here Obama cast himself as the post-ideological pragmatist. But the fact remains that Obama understands his faith in ways that frankly call for more government. In a speech he gave to the Sojourners Forum in 2007, Obama said that each of us has responsibilities and obligations to others, and that these responsibilities and obligations "have to express themselves not just through our churches, and our synagogues, and our mosques, and our temples, not only in our own families, but they have to express themselves through our government."

And remember that empathy deficit. How will it be closed? In a campaign speech at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Obama said that it's not enough

> to bemoan the plight of poor children in this country and remain unwilling to push our elected officials to provide the resources to fix our schools. It is not enough to decry the disparities of health care and yet allow the insurance companies and the drug companies to block much-needed reforms.

To judge by sentiments like these, expect the Obama administration to propose more and more government as his term passes. Expect, too, that unless we Americans succumb to the charms of Obama and completely lose our minds, those old but necessary debates about the nature and purpose of government will revive. ♦

This Is No Time to Panic

Our economy has recovered before and can do so again. BY JOHN STOSSEL

Politicians are in agreement: Government must spend, spend, spend to solve the economic "crisis." The words "economic crisis" are accepted as fact. Why? Why is America in "crisis"?

Treasury secretary Hank Paulson wrote in the *New York Times*, "We are going through a financial crisis more severe and unpredictable than any in our lifetimes." Is he right? Okay, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell more than 5,700 points, but bubbles have to pop. In the summer of '82, the Dow was at 776. At 8,228, as of this writing, stocks have risen 1,047 percent in 25 years. America is still way ahead of the game.

But people are losing their jobs! President Obama frets that "the unemployment rate could reach double digits." Yes, that would be bad, but in the recession of '82, it reached 10.8 percent. Yet no one even *remembers* the "crisis" of '82. Today's 7.2 percent unemployment rate is higher than we've grown used to, but we've experienced that rate 16 times over the past 35 years. And it pales in comparison to the 25 percent rate of the Depression era.

"The bad news is that our economy is broken and there is nothing the government can do to fix it," economist Peter Schiff told the *Wall Street Journal*. "The free market does have a cure: It's called a recession."

Have we become so fragile that we can't handle any recession? The 11 recessions since World War II are part of the "creative destruction" that ultimately drives our economy, yet today politicians act as if they can insulate us from pain with bailouts and "stimulus packages."

Even smart people like Paul Volcker say, "This crisis is different." Politicians say things like this because they're too close to the problem. They've panicked. I saw this again and again doing consumer reporting: People closest to problems often panic beyond reason. After 9/11, people overreacted because of fear of terrorism. We federalized airport security and spent tax money on nonsense like bulletproof vests for dogs. In 1999, it was the Y2K computer technicians themselves who were most convinced that computers would freeze and planes crash. It was the bird flu specialists who were convinced that millions would die from the bird flu. Today, it's the scientists creating global warming computer models who are most insistent that we take economically destructive steps to stop climate change.

Fortunately, the bird flu doctors and global warming fanatics didn't hold the reins of government. Unfortunately, today's most frightened people do. Hank Paulson is surrounded by panic; I assume many of his Wall Street banker buddies called to shout: "It's a catastrophe! I've lost everything!" In the echo-chamber of Washington and Manhattan, one starts to believe that *this* deleveraging is different. This one requires more government. But it doesn't. More government will just delay recovery.

Vice President Biden informed ABC News that "*Everyone* . . . says the scope of this package has to be bold. It has to be big." Everyone? Hardly. More than 100 prominent economists signed a petition against the stimulus package,

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and more than 200 signed a petition against the financial bailout.

I liked the headline that the *Wall Street Journal* gave to an op-ed by George Mason University economist Russ Roberts: "Don't Just Do Something, Stand There." Roberts pointed out that politicians can't wisely spend the trillions they commit, "even if they want to. The information about who needs to be bailed out and who needs to fail is too complicated. . . . It is time to let the imprudent fail and the prudent pick up the bargains."

What if the government had cut loose GM, Citigroup, and the others, forcing them to do what businesses do in hard times: renegotiate with creditors and revalue assets? Wouldn't prices have found a more solid floor? We'll never know. But today the CEOs of those companies would be suckers to drastically revalue assets or sell off a cherished part of the company. If they did that, and then Congress showered their industry with money, they would have cheated their shareholders. Better wait to see what the politicians will do. And so government programs frighten private investors away from making the tough decisions that would start them on the path to real recovery.

Of course some of those companies would fail, and suddenly letting that happen is a political no-no. When the automakers came to Washington to beg, Nancy Pelosi said, "We reject those advocating bankruptcy." Why? Bankruptcy can be a good thing. Kmart declared bankruptcy in 2002, but it didn't disappear. Filing for bankruptcy allowed the company to reorganize itself and reemerge stronger.

George W. Bush told CNN, "I've abandoned free-market principles to save the free-market system." Why did Bush and Pelosi think they knew how to run the economy? F.A. Hayek famously termed this the "fatal conceit"—governments can't possibly know everything that's going on in an economy, and so while government intervention may delay some economic pain, it cannot stop it.

"The arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled," said Cicero in 55 B.C. He was right. ♦

A Misanthrope's World

Andrew Wyeth, 1917-2009.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Andrew Wyeth, 1983

CORBIS

One of the less appealing aspects of art scholarship and criticism in the past half-century has been the extent to which it has wasted its time defining art. To be sure, presented with the spectacle of a row of bricks or Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc" or a dead shark suspended in formaldehyde, one might be prompted to ponder the nature of art. But as with Freud's cigar, there are limits to such inductive reasoning in the realm of painting and sculpture, and we might find ourselves turning and returning to certain artists, and works of art, with relief.

In that sense, it is fair to say that no American artist of his time challenged the prevailing orthodoxy, or begged the what-is-art question, so consistently and so successfully as Andrew Wyeth. With his death last week at 91, a long, complicated, productive, and impressive career came to an end; the debate about his work, of course, will go on indefinitely.

In the marketplace of art and art journalism, Wyeth had two, perhaps three, liabilities. First, he was a representational artist in the high tide of abstract expressionism. A keen eye will discern certain patterns of abstraction in Wyeth's painting, but that would distract the brain from seeing what Wyeth wished it to see. While the great names of mid-20th-century American painting descended ever deeper into conceptual visions, Wyeth remained resolutely "realistic," in form and content.

Second, he was immensely popular—a sure sign of middlebrow distinction, and a serious, usually fatal, stigma in the art-critical world. This is not the same as commercial success,

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by the way; it is one thing to grow rich off the patronage of museums and collectors, quite another to appeal to the general, museum-going public.

To these crosses we may add a corollary or two. Not only was Wyeth representational, he was defiantly representational, and largely consistent in style, giving no quarter to the evolving schools of his lifetime—action painting, environmental earthworks, photo-realism, etc.—and deliberately divorcing himself from the mainstreams of academic art. His reclusiveness, in Pennsylvania's Brandywine Valley and in Maine, was both personal and professional.

He was also, to the extent that such things matter in an artist, conservative in politics as well as temperament. The blessing of Richard Nixon at the White House in 1970 might have been a kind of kiss of death, so far as Wyeth's standing in, say, Manhattan was concerned; but he did not shrink from the occasion, and presumably welcomed it. He famously voted for Ronald Reagan. His perspective on the land of his birth—as seen in his public pronouncements, as well as in some of his better-known pictures—was not ironic.

Of course, what is interesting about Wyeth is not his standing in the gallery world, or his politics, but his art; and what is particularly intriguing about Wyeth is his popular appeal in light of the subject—the tone, mood, perspective—of his paintings. For Wyeth—like his near-contemporary Edward Hopper or his early model Winslow Homer—is very far from a congenial illustrator, or comfortable laureate of national myths.

Wyeth's world, as seen in his bleak, elliptical landscapes, or the wintry isolation and decay of his animate and inanimate subjects, is a misanthrope's world: cold, desolate, barren, godforsaken, largely devoid of humor and warmth. His human subjects gaze off into the middle distance, or stare intently at some unknown spectacle. His animals are fondly rendered, and keenly observed, but equally remote, content and comfortable away from humans. His careful renderings of the low-slung hills and glistening creeks around his native Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, are sunlit, but frozen in time, gripped in a death-like chill.

His most famous painting—or put another way, the painting most favored by the public—is the iconic "Christina's World" (1948), which like much of Wyeth's work, may be seen two ways. It is, at first glance, an appealing vision of a woman, arrayed on the ground of a barren hillside, staring off toward an aging farmhouse set against a blank sky. Yet a mystery obtains: We don't know why the woman is splayed on the grass, whether relaxing or crawling away on the ground. We cannot, in fact, see what she looks like, or know how old she is, or determine whether her "world" is the circumscribed space between her withered arms and the skeletal house.

As we know, of course, Christina Olson was a real neighbor of Wyeth's in Maine, a crippled woman in her fifties who refused to use a wheelchair and subsisted, in considerable squalor, on her own fierce terms in the house on the crest of the hill. Wyeth admired Christina's independence but, as he precisely depicts it, demonstrates how painful the sour remnants of her world must be.

Andrew Wyeth was a singular artist with a stark, compelling vision. Certainly it tells us something about ourselves, as Americans, that this painter of alienation, this severe, austere man who illustrated loneliness with such evident affection and attention to detail, should speak to something that we long to see. ♦

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The Gaza Aftermath

Most Israelis think they won this round

By Max Boot

Palestinian men repair a smuggling tunnel connecting the Gaza Strip and Egypt after its destruction by Israeli forces.

NEWSCOM

Jerusalem

Another war, another debate. When I was last in Israel in August 2006, the war against Hezbollah was just winding down and a great debate was starting. Who won? The results were equivocal enough that both Israel and Hezbollah could claim vindication. Although Hezbollah had lost 600 or so of its fighters, it could take heart from the fact that it managed to hit Israel with hundreds of rockets that killed 43 civilians and had managed to slow down the Israeli military juggernaut and kill 118 soldiers.

The intervening two and a half years in the murky Middle East have provided more evidence for both sides to support claims of victory. For Hezbollah, there is the fact that it has managed to fully rearm itself and is now believed to have more missiles than it did before the war with Israel. It has also managed to extend its sphere of control. After its armed spree in Beirut last year, it won veto power over the Lebanese government.

But there is also evidence that Hezbollah was surprised and caught off guard by the ferocity of Israel's retaliation for the kidnapping of its soldiers; senior Hezbollah leaders said as much. And though the recent hostilities between Israel and Hamas would have been the perfect opportunity for Hezbollah to renew hostilities while Israel was distracted, it declined to do so. When a few rockets were fired recently from southern Lebanon into northern Israel, Hezbollah officials rushed to reassure Israel that they were not responsible. This suggests that Israel had managed to establish some degree of deterrence against this terror organization.

But that is not how most Israelis or most Arabs saw it. What they took away from the 2006 war was the perception that Hezbollah had stood up to Israel better than any previous adversary. Israelis lamented, and Arabs celebrated, that this was the first war Israel had not won, at least not decisively. Israel engaged in a collective soul-searching over what went wrong which led to the firing of the

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defense minister and the armed forces chief of staff and to the convening of a commission to draw lessons from what was widely seen as a bungled operation.

Since then, Israel has worked slowly and methodically to reestablish its deterrence. Two small steps in this process were the aerial bombing in September 2007 of a suspected Syrian nuclear reactor and the car bombing in February 2008 (widely believed to be the work of Mossad) that killed Hezbollah terrorist mastermind Imad Mugniyah in Damascus. A far bigger step occurred on December 27 when Israel launched what turned out to be a three-week onslaught into the Gaza Strip after Hamas dispensed with a six-month ceasefire and resumed firing rockets into southern Israel.

Qassam rocket shells in Sderot

Hamas, like Hezbollah, survived the war not so much because of its military prowess but because of Israel's self-restraint. Destroying Hamas would mean high casualties among Palestinians (and possibly among Israeli soldiers). Even worse from the Israeli public's perspective, it would force Israel to resume the role of occupier that it gave up in Gaza in 2005, because no conceivable alternative—not the "international community," and not Fatah—could come into Gaza on short notice with any hope of displacing Hamas as the effective administration. Not wanting to run the Gaza Strip again and not wanting to experience the possible alternative of Somalia-style chaos on its southern border, Israel chose to fight a highly limited war against Hamas—more like a punitive expedition really.

The Israeli Air Force kicked off Operation Cast Lead at 11:30 A.M. on December 27 with a devastating series of strikes by 70 F-15 and F-16 fighter-bombers armed with satellite-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions. Flying at 28,000 feet—too high to be seen—they hit over 100 targets including a police graduation ceremony that an oblivious Hamas was holding in the open air. Surprise was complete and the attack was devastating. An estimated 200 Hamas fighters died in the war's opening minutes. Over the next week Israeli aircraft hit hundreds more targets—not only Hamas commanders and fighters but also buildings where they have conducted their operations and launched the missiles that hit Israeli towns.

On January 3, after eight days of bombing, Israeli ground forces entered the fray. The offensive was conducted by one division, or about 10,000 soldiers. They quickly drove through the middle of the Gaza Strip all the way to the Mediterranean, isolating Gaza City to the north from the tunnels in the south that are used to smuggle in supplies from Egypt. Israeli forces then fought a war of attrition in the northern Gaza Strip for the next two weeks until Israel declared a ceasefire in the early morning hours of Sunday, January 18, to be followed 12 hours later by a Hamas ceasefire.

Naturally Hamas claimed total vindication. "God has granted us a great victory, not for one faction, or party, or area, but for our entire people," said Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya. "We have stopped the aggression and the enemy has failed to achieve any of its goals." But one doubts that even Haniya believes his own bombast.

Israeli operations, after all, killed some 1,300 Palestinians of whom at least 600 are definitely Hamas operatives—individuals Israel has identified by name. It is likely that the figure is considerably higher (perhaps as high as 1,000), but midway through the war Hamas stopped holding public funerals for its dead, thus making it harder to keep track of its losses. In addition, Israel eliminated hundreds of tunnels that are used to smuggle military materiel into the Gaza Strip, while destroying an estimated 1,200 rockets.

It is true that Hamas managed to keep firing short-range rockets into Israel, but they caused scant casualties. More important, Hamas did not manage to produce dramatic images of burned-out Israeli tanks or captured Israeli soldiers. There was no major setback this time to compare with Hezbollah's ability to cripple an Israeli warship in 2006 with a sophisticated cruise missile. Israeli units skillfully bypassed or blew up the various improvised explosive devices that Hamas had installed to block an invasion. In most cases, rather than risk soldiers in booby-trapped houses, the Israelis leveled the empty structures with tank blasts or with armored D-9 bulldozers. Electronic jamming was so effective that many residents of southern Israel complained that their garage door openers weren't working. Such tactics proved highly

PUBLIC DOMAIN / MAX BOOT

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effective. Only 10 Israeli soldiers died in the war and half of them were victims of "friendly fire."

In contrast to the halting, ham-handed operations against Hezbollah, this time the Israel Defense Forces appeared well-prepared and purposeful. They had learned the lessons of 2006, especially about the need for closer cooperation between the ground and air forces.

What they did not manage to do, because it was never their purpose, was to finish off Hamas for good. Israeli officials did not publicly announce that they were willing to leave Hamas in power, because they wanted to keep their enemies off balance, but that was the reality underlying Operation Cast Lead. As a result, there is little doubt that Hamas, like Hezbollah, will rise from the rubble to emerge as strong as ever—and probably stronger.

Some Israeli officials express hope that the Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas can reenter Gaza on the back of the trucks that will be bringing in reconstruction supplies. Fat chance. Hamas used the war to reassert its control in Gaza by killing, wounding, or torturing at least 100 Fatah officials who were accused of "collaboration" with Israel. All indications are that the Palestinian Authority's close association with Israel has only further damaged its already eroded standing among residents of both Gaza and the West Bank, while Hamas has claimed even more firmly for itself the mantle of "resistance movement" against the hated "Zionist entity."

Hamas's friends in Iran, moreover, already have considerable experience in helping its clients rebuild after an Israeli war. They helped Hezbollah do such a good job of reconstruction in 2006 that Hassan Nasrallah's hold on southern Lebanon was actually strengthened. The same thing is likely to happen in Gaza no matter how hard outside donors try to route assistance outside of Hamas channels. Given the degree of Hamas control in Gaza, it is in a perfect position to claim credit for any reconstruction that occurs and to blame whatever does not happen on Israel. "I'm not very optimistic in our ability to cope with reconstruction as well as the Iranians do," a retired Israeli general admitted to a group of visiting military analysts organized by the American Jewish Committee.

The only faint hope of hindering Hamas in the future rests in Egypt's presumed ability to close off tunnels running from its territory into Gaza. Israel only agreed to suspend Cast Lead after Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak gave vague assurances that he would move against the smugglers and after outgoing Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pledged that the United States would offer equally unspecified assistance in this endeavor. All these pledges are likely to prove as hollow as the promises by the United Nations and European Union in 2006 to prevent the rearming of Hezbollah.

Two varieties of bomb shelter in Sderot

The Americans and Europeans simply do not have any way of stopping an elaborate smuggling network that runs

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via the sea from Iran to Sudan and from there overland to Egypt and finally under the ground into the Gaza Strip. The smuggling routes are under the control of Sinai Bedouin, while the Gaza tunnels are privately owned by various Palestinian clans and entrepreneurs and licensed by Hamas, which taxes their activities. This is a big business, since smuggled goods include not only weapons but everything from food to drugs. The smugglers offer big payoffs to Egyptian soldiers to look the other way.

Mubarak has had little incentive to stop this lucrative operation. What does he care if Hamas kills Israelis? Better that, from his perspective, than that they should unite with their Muslim Brotherhood compatriots to fight his own regime. In any case, the Sinai is not fully under the control of Egypt's sclerotic government. The Bedouin are an independent force who can express their displeasure with Cairo by staging bombings, as they have done repeatedly, at Sinai beach resorts, thus hurting Egypt's lucrative tourist trade. It is hard to see why the current war between Israel and Hamas should lead Mubarak to change his hardheaded geopolitical calculus by tangling with either Hamas or its Bedouin business partners.

Hamas will rearm and prepare to fight another day. Although it lost at least 600 fighters, it still has more than 10,000 left. It has accrued prestige that will allow it to mount an even stronger challenge to the decrepit Fatah bosses of the West Bank. Mahmoud Abbas's term as president of the Palestinian Authority expired earlier this year but he dares not call another election for fear that Hamas would win. "If the IDF leaves the West Bank, Hamas will take over in five minutes," says Khaled Abu Toameh, the *Jerusalem Post*'s fearless Palestinian correspondent. "Hamas continues to be as strong as ever."

Hamas has accrued prestige that will allow it to mount an even stronger challenge to the decrepit Fatah bosses of the West Bank. 'If the IDF leaves the West Bank, Hamas will take over in five minutes,' says Khaled Abu Toameh, the Jerusalem Post's fearless Palestinian correspondent.

Part of Hamas's strength derives, paradoxically, from its claims to victimhood. Somewhat at odds with its boasts of "victory" was its rush to showcase all the suffering caused by the Israeli offensive. Hamas, like Hezbollah, is skillfully directing the attention of the news media at the damage caused by Israel, while diverting attention from the reason for that damage—Hamas's habit of hiding among civilians. Israel made every possible effort to avoid collateral damage. It made hundreds of thousands of phone calls and dropped hundreds of thousands of leaflets warning residents of Gaza to leave areas that were about to be targeted. When the Israeli Air Force detected Palestinian civilians atop buildings, it dropped tiny bombs designed to cause little damage. Only when the civilians had cleared off did the air force drop larger munitions that flattened the structure. It is hard to see how Israel could have been more sparing in its application of firepower unless it were willing to limit its response to a symbolic, ineffectual strike that would effectively give Hamas a free pass to rocket its territory with impunity.

This is a hard case to make, however, because there are no scenes of destruction in Israel to compare with those in the Gaza Strip. I got to see part of the explanation for this disparity on a trip to Sderot, the Israeli town of 23,000 inhabitants that adjoins the Gaza Strip and has been the main target for Hamas rockets. Hundreds of rockets have fallen on the city in the past eight years. During that period, Sderot has never enjoyed more than four days in a row without being under fire. But most of the rockets are homemade Qassams that have a short range and a small warhead. (Hamas is stockpiling longer-range, more destructive Grad rockets that can reach major cities like Ashkelon and Ashdod, but thankfully it does not have many of those yet.)

Numerous impact points could be seen around Sderot, including slight damage all around an elementary school. To guard against this danger Israel has developed an elaborate civil defense system centered around ubiquitous concrete shelters. Complex radar systems, some attached to giant balloons floating above Gaza City, instantly detect missile launchings and calculate trajectories. "Code red" warnings are then relayed to the target area via loudspeakers, radio, and television. That gives civilians 15 to 20 seconds to take cover. Through constant practice, most do so. Thus they survive, physically at least, though the mental toll of living under nonstop bombardment, especially for children, must be severe.

When critics of Israel complain about the supposed "disproportionality" of its response, they are, in effect, penalizing Israel for the success of its civil defense efforts, while letting Hamas off the hook for not making any similar effort to protect the population of Gaza. Instead of sheltering civilians, Hamas uses them as human shields. Its bunkers are reserved for its own high command.

But that is how the game is played in the Middle East, and once again Hamas will reap a public-relations windfall while Israel will be castigated as a human-rights abuser.

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Hamas supporters rally in the West Bank, January 23.

NEWSCOM

The Israeli public seems to have accepted such slander as the price of battling those who would destroy it. Their support for the war effort remained overwhelming throughout.

If there is any complaint in Israel it is not that the offensive was too barbaric but that it was too restrained. Israeli soldiers, in particular, grumbled when they were pulled out of Gaza without having killed as many Hamas fighters as they would have liked. (Apparently Hamas adopted a strategy of not letting most of its militants engage in frontal attacks on Israeli forces that likely would have led to their demise.) But the outgoing government, led by lame duck Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, thought it had done as much damage as it could without inflicting unacceptable civilian casualties. And it was determined to end the offensive in advance of Israel's February 10 elections and, just as important, the inauguration of Barack Obama on January 20. (Israeli leaders did not want to begin their relationship with the new American president while they were in the midst of a war that he might feel compelled to criticize.)

It may not have been as satisfying as winning the enemy's unconditional surrender, but the Gaza war nevertheless can be counted as a victory for Israel. A highly limited and attenuated victory, to be sure, but one that nevertheless restored Israelis' self-confidence and Arabs' fear of provoking Israel, both of which had been badly damaged by the inconclusive 2006 conflict with Hezbollah. Many Israeli officials expressed to us the expectation that after this war Israel's enemies will view it as a "crazy animal" that they cannot afford to bait. "Hamas will think again, not 17 times but 17 million times, before they shoot the next bullet at us," an Israeli government official told us, although a retired general suggested that more incursions will be necessary to keep Hamas from mounting fresh attacks.

Most Israelis are under no illusion that they have won a lasting peace or anything more than the chance to get on with their lives for a few more years before they have to fight another war. They know that on the horizon looms the ultimate threat—a nuclear Iran. But for now what the Israel Defense Forces have accomplished is good enough for a disillusioned public that has come to believe that neither confrontation nor appeasement can produce a lasting victory against Palestinian terrorists.

In Washington, there is talk of "solving" the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. In Tel Aviv and Jerusalem there is resignation that the problem has no solution, at least not in the foreseeable future. "Israelis," says Labor party candidate Einat Wilf, "have found comfort in disillusionment—comfort in not expecting too much." ♦

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Ground Zero for the GOP

The first rematch of the Obama era will be the Virginia governor's race this fall

By Jennifer Rubin

Republicans' 2008 election losses have spawned a spate of self-reflection. Was it just President Bush and the economy? Was it too much religion or ineffective candidates? Was opposition to immigration reform the death knell with minorities, or did Republicans fail to explain tried and true conservative principles? The theoretical argument rages among media elites and Beltway insiders, but the impact of Republicans' declining fortunes is more vivid—and the test of their ability to battle back more concrete—just a few miles south of Washington D.C. in the suburbs of Northern Virginia.

Tom Davis spent 14 years on Fairfax County's board of supervisors and then 14 more in Congress. He hasn't had many leisurely Saturday mornings in the last few decades, with all the civic events and campaign mixers to attend. But on a rainy Saturday, he and his wife, Jeannemarie Devolites Davis, were relaxing in their living room, their two small white dogs scampering about. They are both officially retired (albeit not entirely voluntarily and perhaps not permanently) from politics—she after failing to be reelected to her Virginia state senate seat in 2007 and he after retirement from the House last year.

It is not clear whether Davis is talking personally when he explains that in the George W. Bush era, Virginia Republicans were often "just collateral damage." The only way for voters to vote against Bush in midterm elections was to vote against Republicans in House, Senate, and state races. "It's our own fault. The party branding is what killed us."

The Davises' departure from politics, both replaced by Democrats, is symptomatic of the declining fortunes of the Republican party in Virginia. Less than a decade ago, Virginia had a Republican governor, two Republican senators, a majority Republican congressional delegation, and Republican control in both houses of the state legislature. Virginians voted Republican in every presidential election from 1964 to 2004. Now, only five of eleven House seats are held by Republicans, while both Senate seats, the governorship, and the state senate are in Democratic hands. Barack Obama carried Virginia 53-46 percent in November.

Virginians voted Republican in every presidential election from 1964 to 2004. Now Democrats hold six of eleven House seats, both Senate seats, the governorship, and the state senate.

Davis reels off the list of reasons for the GOP's decline in Virginia, and across the country: "A very unpopular war fueled the left," an unpopular president, and a huge money disparity (four to one in favor of the Democrats in Virginia, he says). An influx of minorities and urban professionals into Virginia was another problem because the Republican "message doesn't address or invite the newcomers." "Democrats have the ball," he says. "Republicans have to hope they fumble. But we're not ready to pounce on the fumble." Republicans, he contends, are in danger of approaching Whig status, "talking about issues less and less relevant" to the average voter.

Although Davis is blunt about the state party (a "closed shop," he says, which doesn't promote viable candidates), he is not down on its prospects. Given the economy and the spending disadvantage in Virginia in 2008, he says, "It should have been a lot worse given the atmospherics. There is a lot of hope there." He says simply, "We have to decide

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if we want to be a winning coalition." Republicans have continued their hold on rural and religious voters in the southern and western portions of the state, but have fallen on hard times in the affluent (and more liberal) suburbs of Northern Virginia. They have had trouble nominating candidates that can appeal in both parts of the state. As more liberal voters flooded into Virginia over the last decade, the electoral math just grew more challenging for Republicans.

Larry J. Sabato, veteran political observer at the University of Virginia, sees the GOP's predicament in similar terms:

> It's the combination of Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, college communities, black rural counties, and highly educated populations in old and new suburbs that is proving lethal to the GOP in Virginia. This is the 53 percent majority for Obama we saw on Election Day. This majority is growing rather than declining with time. The various constituent parts of this majority coalition have discovered one another, and they appear pleased with the alliance. The outsiders for so much of Virginia's history have become the insiders, and they like it.

The danger is that the damage may persist, Sabato explains. "The new voters, first-time voters, and young voters may be lost to the GOP for a lifetime. In American history a party identification acquired early and forcefully can last a lifetime."

New Virginia voters have tipped the balance to the Democrats. (Although Virginia voters don't register by party, Republicans' 39-35 percent advantage in 2004 exit polling plummeted to a 33-39 percent deficit in 2008.) For several elections, Democrats have been running up increasingly large margins in voter-rich Fairfax County, but the real 2008 story, says the *Cook Political Report*'s David Wasserman, was in the Tidewater and Richmond regions where Democrats' turnout soared, and Obama won by healthy margins.

Obama's success in Loudoun, Prince William, and Spotsylvania reflects the Republicans' nationwide problem with nonwhite and young voters. With nonwhite voters showing double digit gains in Northern Virginia's outer suburbs, the pool of reliable white, conservative voters shrank as a percentage of the electorate. Similarly, the GOP's poor showing with young voters became acute when Obama turned out huge numbers in college towns (up 49 percent in Charlottesville, for example).

The open question, both in Virginia and nationally, is whether these gains are permanent or a result of a once-in-a-lifetime Obama turnout machine that targeted Virginia as a swing state. (Obama successfully raised turnout 15 percent with huge gains among African Americans, a phenomenon not sustainable in nonpresidential election years.)

Some attribute the GOP's woes not to larger national or geographic trends but to poor candidates or poor campaigns, ruefully recalling the failed 2005 governor's race when Jerry Kilgore emphasized the death penalty, illegal immigration, and social issues but spoke little about bread-and-butter Virginia issues like education and transportation. Others point to a spate of embarrassing public gaffes by rural Republicans as evidence the party is too extreme or unwelcoming to minorities.

Tom Davis and Jeannemarie Devolites Davis

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The guessing game about whether Republicans can bounce back is intensifying in Virginia thanks to the 2009 gubernatorial race—the first big political race of the Obama era. Eight times since the 1970s, Virginia has elected a gubernatorial candidate from the party opposite to the one which captured the White House the prior year. Even aside from this historical trend, Republicans like their chances in Virginia.

For starters, the Democrats lack a dominating candidate like former governor and now senator Mark Warner or his successor, Tim Kaine, and are headed for a hotly con-

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tested primary. Former DNC chairman Terry McAuliffe is spending heavily to overpower two other contenders, Brian J. Moran, until recently a state delegate, and state senator R. Creigh Deeds. (Moran and Deeds are respected Virginia politicians who "have pounded the pavement," says Wasserman, but both lack an easy path to the nomination.) By contrast, McAuliffe will have tens of millions of dollars from across the country (Virginia has no campaign finance limits) and the best team and ads he can buy.

McDonnell and family welcome Army 2nd Lt. Jeanine McDonnell home from Iraq, June 2006.

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Republicans are keen to match up against McAuliffe. "A good case can be made that, despite his money and national connections, McAuliffe would be the toughest sale to make to Virginians for Democrats. His Clinton baggage alone will cost him a lot," says Sabato. "And no one thinks he fits the long-time image of a Virginia governor." It came as a surprise to many Virginians that McAuliffe was even a resident given his complete lack of participation in local politics. (He explored a run for governor of Florida several years back.)

While the Democrats are headed into battle, the Republicans have already settled on a candidate, Virginia attorney general Robert McDonnell. He is a 21-year veteran of the U.S. Army, a father of five (whose daughter just returned from service in Iraq), a Northern Virginia native, and a Catholic. He is conservative on social issues, but known for his bipartisan, workmanlike approach as AG and for his attempts to forge a deal on Virginia's knottiest issue: transportation.

Republican strategists think they finally may have a candidate suited to win across the state. McDonnell was the last statewide Republican candidate (in 2005) to win suburban counties like Prince William, Loudoun, Henrico, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach. Even if he does not win Fairfax County—where one in seven Virginia voters lives—Republicans think he can get at least 45 percent of those voters while doing well in the outer suburbs and his home base of Virginia Beach and in more rural areas.

There is certainly nothing "Old Virginia" about McDonnell. He appears to be the quintessential Northern Virginia businessman. Trimly built and slightly graying, McDonnell, 54, is a departure from recent Republican candidates in Virginia. He looks much like the urban and suburban voters he is courting—polite, soft-spoken, and surrounded by an array of electronic gadgetry which allows him to keep up on paper work and communicate with his office during long days on the road. He is dressed neatly in a gray suit as he travels from stop to stop on a typical day of retail politics. Only a slight accent ever peeks through: There is no drawl, no cowboy boots, and virtually no talk about hot button social issues. He reiterates his strong pro-life record, from which he insists, "I will not deviate one iota," but stresses, "You gotta connect with voters on what they care about."

McDonnell is aware of the luxury of watching his opponents fight it out for six months. By the end of June, he jokes, the Democrats will be "broke, tired, and divided." Still, he is realistic: "At the same time the mainstream media love the chase. They're going to have the chase and I'm not." Still, he's not concerned that he will be out of the limelight. As attorney general he can make news—as he did with his recent appeal to the Supreme Court of a Virginia Supreme Court decision striking down a portion of an anti-spam statute that he championed. And an all-star lineup of GOP favorites from Arnold Schwarzenegger to Sarah Palin and Rudy Giuliani will draw crowds to his rallies while the Democrats squabble.

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And he's making the most of his time by staying out on the trail, reassuring the base, reaching out to ethnic voters and honing the themes of his campaign. In remarks before the Mount Vernon Women's Republican Club, he rattles off his career highlights and reminds the group of his connections to Northern Virginia. He vows to make his campaign about "common sense conservative principles." The Virginia Republican party is clearly in need of help, and McDonnell makes no bones about it. He constantly asks, "What can we do better?"

As we travel between stops, McDonnell diverts his driver around the suburbs of Northern Virginia, pointing out his old elementary and high schools, and pulling up into the driveway of the modest Mount Vernon home where he grew up. The day is full of reminiscing—there is where he collected driftwood near a stream at Ft. Belvoir, here is where he would sled down the street ("If you got rolling and had enough wax you could go down this second hill"), and that's the house where his childhood friend, now an aide to one of the Democratic contenders, grew up. The message is clear: Unlike Terry McAuliffe, Bob McDonnell is a homegrown Virginian. More important, he is a *Northern* Virginian. And that is key—because that's where the votes are.

His emphasis on his Northern Virginian roots is only one indication that his campaign is the product of lessons learned from prior Republican defeats. If Republicans have been losing in Virginia's suburbs and exurbs, McDonnell is committed to campaigning in them and selling conservatism there. If Republicans were tagged as too ideological, he is emphatic: "We win by addressing quality of life issues." If Republicans did poorly with minorities, he says it is now "absolutely imperative to talk to members of new ethnic communities" and explain how Republican policies relate to their concerns. Indeed his schedule this day—visits with a Republican women's group, Hispanic leaders, and Korean community leaders—reflects the diverse electorate he needs to inspire. On the immigration debate, he is particularly blunt about Republican failures. We "haven't articulated that properly. The discussion didn't start with the proposition that we encourage lawful immigration." Declaring himself to be an advocate of immigration reform at the federal level he says that visa limits need to be raised while borders are enforced. He is emphatic that illegal immigrants who commit crimes need to be deported, but he returns to his central theme: "The message [must be] welcoming to new immigrants to come to America lawfully and pursue the American dream."

His meeting with a group of Korean-American community leaders in a law office in Annandale—the heart of the growing Korean community in Northern Virginia—is revealing. This is the face of the "new Virginia" which a McCain campaign aide referred to as "not real Virginia."

Campaigning in Wakefield, Virgnia, 2006

OFFICE OF THE VIRGINIA ATTORNEY GENERAL

Koreans are one of the largest ethnic minorities in the state, and McDonnell wants to make inroads here. First and second generation Korean-Americans pepper him with questions: "Why do you want to be governor?" What are Republicans doing to avoid the label as the "rich, white party"? One woman says that Democrats are able to say, "We are for average people."

McDonnell is candid without being defensive. "We haven't done nearly as well as we should engaging you." He smoothly moves to talking about Republican values as a natural fit for immigrant business people—low taxes, less regulation and litigation, hard work, responsibility, and education. He knows his audience well and gets approving murmurs and nods when he promises this group—which prizes education as a way up the ladder of success (and includes parents of many overachieving school age children)—to address the issue of making sure "kids with 3.8 [grade point] averages [can get] into UVA and Virginia Tech."

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While pundits and Beltway insiders dwell on the fine points of policy, this crowd just wants attention for their community. An effervescent woman sporting a bright red blazer and a large gold elephant brooch implores McDonnell, "Just come for five minutes [to community events]. Eat our food. Shake our hands. They want more openness. . . . Don't be shy."

It is a similar scene later that evening at a gathering of regional Hispanic leaders, many veterans of past Republican campaigns. They aren't timid about reminding McDonnell of the challenge for Republican candidates. One attendee tells McDonnell matter-of-factly that he must make inroads with Northern Virginia Hispanics: "If we [end up] with over a 100,000 vote deficit from Northern Virginia, we'll be in trouble." He suggests that the group can help "craft a message" that is both conservative and appealing to Hispanic voters.

McDonnell begins his remarks with a welcome in passable Spanish, noting that his wife speaks Spanish and lived in Mexico. And he picks up on the offer, "Your wanting to help me craft a message is incredibly helpful. I understand we need to run a different kind of race." He acknowledges that Republicans haven't connected on the issues that Hispanics care about. He repeats the message of the day, "I do need your help."

After the meeting, Sergio, a professional in his mid-30s, tells me that Republicans' errors boil down to a "messaging mistake." He explains, "You ask people what Obama's message was? 'Change.' McCain's? You get 13 answers." And what of the argument that McCain's poor showing with Hispanics "proves" that immigration reform is a loser for Republicans? He smiles, "Look at any leader of color in the GOP. They will tell you that [if that's the view], we won't win a national election ever again." On school choice and entrepreneurship he says Republicans can make headway. The challenge he says is to "rebuild the party" and "make it more inclusive."

These are tough times in Virginia as they are around the country. A looming budget deficit, deficient infrastructure, and concerns about overcrowded state universities will confront the next governor. But despite the economic difficulties and his party's recent failures, McDonnell is upbeat. "We ought to be happy conservatives," he counsels. "We think our principles work, and we should act like it."

Indeed what is striking is the degree to which Republicans around the state do seem *happy*. The end of the Bush presidency seems to have lifted a weight from them. McDonnell doesn't mince words, "The central message of Obama and state races was to make George Bush the scapegoat for all that was wrong with America." And, he concedes, conservatives weren't any happier with Bush's spending spree and the failure to achieve promised reforms. Sandy Liddy Bourne, the incoming president of the Mount Vernon Women's Republican Club, points out, "This is a great moment of growth [for the state GOP]. We cut a lot of dead wood. We have real work to do. The Democrats *really* outworked us on absentee ballots, turnout," but with a liberal Democratic president and Democratic Congress, "I'm very excited to have a moment of clarity."

A Republican insider suggested to me that Democrats may have the same problem Republicans had in portraying Obama as a radical: The extremism charge doesn't seem to fit the mild-mannered McDonnell.

McDonnell is certainly not naïve about what lies ahead. Democrats recognize the race's importance. It is not just about holding the governorship of a swing state for a third term, but a chance to confirm that their 2008 victories were not just a reflection of Barack Obama personally, but of a broader shift in the national political terrain. McDonnell expects the race to be tough, even nasty, and Democrats to make familiar arguments that the Republicans are "extremists," obsessed by social issues. (A Virginia Republican insider suggested to me that the Democrats may have the same problem that Republicans had portraying Obama as a radical: The extremism charge simply doesn't seem to fit the mild-mannered and practical-minded figure they will be facing.)

While the Virginia contest will garner national attention and be judged as the bellwether of Republican fortunes, McDonnell tries to keep it in perspective: "I'm the first significant statewide race [after the 2008 election] but I'm not running to save the national Republican party. I'm running to be a visionary governor of Virginia." But money will pour in, and national political figures will pay visits. What is at stake is not just the Virginia governorship, but the political storyline heading into the 2010 midterm elections. This is a lot of pressure on McDonnell, but if he pulls it off, his formula—conservative principles, minority outreach, and a problem-solving message—will become the model for Republicans trekking back from the political wilderness. And if not, he'll be fodder for those contending that Republicans are headed for a long sojourn in that wilderness. ♦

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What to Do About the Gitmo Detainees

The ball is in Congress's court

By Stephanie Hessler

On his second day in office, President Obama issued an executive order to close the Guantánamo Bay detention camp within one year. He also ordered a suspension of military trials for Guantánamo detainees—including the prosecution of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, an admitted 9/11 plotter—and a review of the status of each detainee. According to the president, shutting the facility will end a "sad chapter in American history" and restore us to the "moral high ground." What it won't do is dispose of the 250 prisoners.

As even the *New York Times* finally acknowledges, there are "sobering intelligence claims against many of the remaining detainees." Indeed, just last month, five 9/11 plotters held at Guantánamo offered to plead guilty to many terror attacks. One implored Osama bin Laden to "attack the American enemy with all his power." Another detainee boasted, "I admit to you it is my honor to be an enemy of the United States." President Obama can close Guantánamo, but that won't make these terrorists go away.

Gitmo detainee Abdullah Mehsud, upon his release . . .

REUTERS / AHMAD MASOOD AM / CP

What is needed now—as Secretary of Defense Gates has acknowledged—is for the executive branch to work with Congress to draft comprehensive legislation that will provide a framework for handling these detainees. Before Guantánamo is closed, this new framework must provide a legal structure for three kinds of cases. First, for detainees against whom there is sufficient admissible evidence of crimes, the administration may seek trials in our criminal justice system. Second, for detainees who cannot successfully be prosecuted but who still pose a danger, the administration may opt for continued detention somewhere other than Guantánamo. Third, detainees who cannot be tried and are determined to pose no further threat may be released to another country. Each option poses challenges that may be addressed by legislation.

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NEW TRIALS

Having rejected the military tribunals established by Congress, President Obama wants to explore trying some of the detainees in our federal courts. He has cited the prosecutions of the 1993 World Trade Center plotters as an instructive legal model. But it is likely that only a fraction of the dangerous detainees can be prosecuted successfully.

First, granting enemy combatants the same constitutional rights as U.S. citizens places an extremely high burden of proof on the United States, while affording alleged terrorists expansive discovery privileges. These privileges may include the right to call witnesses at trial—such as CIA agents, military personnel, and Department of Defense officials. Empowering alleged terrorists to summon these officers from the front lines to appear in court might impede our ability to prevent another attack.

Second, some of the evidence against detainees may be inadmissible in a criminal proceeding because it was obtained either by military interrogation or from a foreign source on promise of confidentiality.

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Third, trials could disclose classified information, including sources and methods of intelligence gathering. In the trial of Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman for the 1993 World Trade Center bombings, for example, the prosecution had to share with the defense a list of unindicted co-conspirators. We know now that within 10 days this list of key operatives was in the hands of Osama bin Laden.

In addition to these obstacles, there is the fact that trying alleged terrorists after an attack does little to prevent the next one. Before September 11, the United States treated terrorists like garden-variety criminals. But because of the requirements of our criminal justice system, many dangerous enemies were able to avoid prosecution. Osama bin Laden, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and at least 18 other 9/11 suspects were actually under indictment in the United States long before 9/11. It did not stop them from attacking us on September 11.

Having recognized that the criminal justice system is inadequate to prevent terrorist acts, we changed our approach to terrorism on 9/11—shifting focus from punishment to prevention. Now that President Obama's primary responsibility is to keep Americans safe, treating alien terrorists as U.S. criminal defendants may seem less viable than it did on the campaign trail.

In drafting legislation, Congress must be mindful of its duty to protect national security by keeping classified information out of the wrong hands, and it must consider which due process rights should be afforded to alien unlawful enemy combatants.

Classified intelligence—both sources and technologies for conducting terrorist surveillance—must be prevented from reaching terrorists. The current Classified Information Protection Act is inadequate, for the simple reason that court orders do not deter terrorists from disclosing classified information.

One promising option is the establishment of a special Article III national security court, an idea that has gained traction across the political spectrum. Andrew McCarthy, who prosecuted Omar Abdel-Rahman, has proposed such a court, and one of President Obama's legal advisers, Laurence Tribe of Harvard, has endorsed something similar. In such a court, classified information could be submitted to the judge in his chambers *ex parte*, with nonclassified summaries provided to the defendant; or classified evidence could be revealed to the defendant's lawyer only after the lawyer had obtained a security clearance.

Likewise, Congress could amend the Federal Rules of Evidence and the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, specifying the process due for alleged alien terrorists. The new procedures could modify discovery rights and evidentiary rules without offending the Constitution.

CONTINUED DETENTION

The Supreme Court has recognized the president's power to detain enemy combatants in time of war. And President Obama acknowledged in his executive order that there may be detainees who cannot successfully be prosecuted, but still pose a danger. The Obama administration may learn that to protect our national security we must use preventive detention, as we have for the past seven years. President Obama can fulfill his campaign promise to "close Guantánamo," but many of the most dangerous detainees may simply have to be transferred to a similar detention center with a different name.

Presuming detainees are moved to a military base or prison in the United States, they will inevitably seek to challenge their detention in federal courts. This summer, the Supreme Court ruled in *Boumediene* v. *Bush* that detainees held at Guantánamo could file habeas petitions in U.S. courts to contest their detention. This holding almost certainly will apply to detainees transferred into the United States. (Indeed, a federal judge just held a hearing to consider whether *Boumediene* reaches a military prison in Afghanistan where the United States holds approximately three times the number of detainees now at Guantánamo Bay.)

In the seven months since *Boumediene*, Congress has neglected to set up rules to govern these detention proceedings. It has failed to act despite pleas from both the executive and judicial branches: Former attorney general Michael Mukasey urged Congress "to pass legislation to ensure that the proceedings mandated by the Supreme Court are conducted in a responsible and prompt way." And the chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia asked Congress for "guidance sooner rather than later." These pleas fell on deaf ears. The response of the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Democrat Patrick Leahy, was to throw up his hands: "I don't know how we'd ever get anything this complex and get the kind of consensus needed to get something passed."

As a result, federal judges—with no particular national security expertise—have been compelled to make up rules for these proceedings case by case. Judges are left to decide how to handle classified information, witness testimony, discovery rights, and many other issues. And their decisions are bound to vary from courtroom to courtroom, introducing inconsistency and unpredictability. (A district court judge drafted guidelines, but they are discretionary.)

Congress should enact rules to govern suits brought by unlawful enemy combatants challenging their detention. It should assume that the process constitutionally due to alien enemies may be quite different from the process due to U.S. citizens in a criminal case. As the Supreme Court explained in *United States* v. *Hamdi*, "enemy combatant

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proceedings may be tailored to alleviate their uncommon potential to burden the Executive at a time of ongoing military conflict."

With that in mind, there are at least three provisions that should be included to help protect our national security. First, our troops on the battlefield must not be hauled into court by unlawful enemy combatants. The rules could instruct that military personnel generally do not have to appear as witnesses in these proceedings, perhaps submitting affidavits in lieu of live testimony. Second, just as in detainee trials, classified information must be protected from falling into the hands of enemies. Rules governing habeas proceedings could resemble those for detainee prosecutions and provide for *ex parte* submission of classified information. Third, unlawful enemy combatants held outside the United States must not be permitted to enter our borders to appear at habeas proceedings. Mukasey warned of the "extraordinary" security effort required to transport a detainee to the United States. Rules could provide that an enemy combatant could attend the habeas proceeding and take the stand only via video link. Finally, if Congress sets up a national security court for detainee trials, it could provide that court with exclusive jurisdiction over detention proceedings.

Six months later, Mehsud is back in the terror business.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RELEASE

Even releasing detainees who are no longer deemed to be a threat may prove easier said than done. For one thing, it may be difficult to discern who is no longer dangerous. According to the Pentagon, more than 60 former detainees have resumed their terrorist mission. For example, Abdul Ghaffar, a former Guantánamo detainee, returned to Afghanistan and allegedly became a leader of the Taliban. Similarly, after his release, Abdullah Mehsud plotted the kidnapping of two Chinese engineers in Pakistan. Yet another example, Mohamed Yusif Yaqub, reportedly organized a jailbreak in Afghanistan, as well as a nearly successful capture of the town of Spin Boldak. And these are men the United States determined were *not* a major threat.

In addition, for each detainee cleared for release, the Obama administration will have to consider carefully whether the receiving country is willing and able to prevent the individual from taking up arms. Some 40 percent of remaining Guantánamo detainees are Yemeni, and Yemen has a poor record in this regard. Three former detainees released to Yemen have been identified as the perpetrators of the bombing of the U.S. embassy there last September that killed at least 16 people. Although the government of Yemen has promised to institute a rehabilitation program for former detainees, a senior U.S. official expressed "significant concerns" about its capacity to follow through.

Worse yet, some detainees may not be accepted by any country. The new administration can either continue to detain these people while seeking an accommodating nation or release them into the United States. One district judge has already ordered 17 detainees from Guantánamo brought to the United States and released into our nation's capital. The government strenuously objected, arguing that detainee release into the United States "squarely conflicts with the immigration laws." These detainees have not yet been released in Washington only because the issue is on appeal.

Although President Obama has not specified his plans for detainees who cannot be returned to another country, it seems unlikely he will choose to release them within our borders. Secretary Gates recently called on Congress to pass a law providing "that if somebody is released from Guantánamo they cannot seek asylum in the United States."

According to the Bush Justice Department, the Immigration and Nationality Act already prohibits a court from ordering the release into the United States of an alien Guantánamo detainee. Moreover, our immigration laws bar entry to anyone who "has received military-type training . . . from or on behalf of any organization that, at the time the training was received, was a terrorist organization." This provision could cover many of the current detainees.

Despite these statutes, certain judges need further instruction on this point. Congress could revise the immigration laws, as Gates suggested, to deny Guantánamo detainees asylum in the United States. The bill could perhaps allow them to apply for entry to America if no accepting country had been found within a certain amount of time.

To conclude: To close Guantánamo, there must be comprehensive legislation covering detainee trials, continued detention, and release. A few days after the election, the *New York Times* ran a full-page ACLU ad urging Obama to close Guantánamo "on day one, with the stroke of a pen." If only reality were as simple as rhetoric. ♦

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Ceiling of the Lady Chapel at Wells Cathedral

CORBIS

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The Gothic Vision

Blueprints for technology in patterns of design

BY DAVID GELERNTER

We see better when we recognize and can name (at least for our own purposes) the things we see. If you can tell a delphinium from a daylily, or a Titian from a Rubens, or a Honda Civic from a Lotus Elise, you see the world in sharper focus than someone who can't.

Gothic architecture—which emerged near Paris in the 1140s, became a powerful artistic force in most of Europe and remained so through the early 1500s—has been studied seriously since the 19th century. No other style of art in Western history has had such an intensely magnetic (sometimes passionate, sometimes hypnotic) appeal. You might imagine that every aspect of Gothic worth recognizing has already been recognized. Not true. Ideas from computer science sharpen our focus on Gothic architecture. They help us identify a fundamental design gesture that historians have seen in particular cases, but haven't described as the widespread, general phenomenon it is—because they lack the intellectual or ideational vocabulary.

Software has already played a role in research and writing on medieval architecture. The eminent Alain Erlande-Brandenburg's recent book on the cathedral of Reims (2007) is part of the new "Grand témoins de l'architecture" series. Each book is based on a fabulously detailed software model, which allows one to study the building of interest from unexpected viewpoints. Of course, the practice of architecture has been in the hands of the computer-aided design industry for years; historical essays illustrated by sophisticated computer-generated images are common. Yet the best such images approach nowhere within miles of the detail, precision, and beauty of engravings from the studios of such 19th-century master medievalists as Augustus Pugin, Robert Billings, and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc.

Allow me to discuss technology as a source not of tools but ideas. Computer science is useful in this case because software happens to resemble Gothic architecture in an unexpected way—"recursive structure" is important to each.

A structure is said to be recursive if the shape of the whole recurs in the shape of the parts. Imagine a circle, for example, formed of welded links that are circles themselves. Each circular link could itself be made of smaller circles, and in principle you might have an unbounded nest of circles made of circles made of circles. This sort of structure is surprisingly important in software, and in Gothic architecture.

The idea of recursive structure didn't originate with modern computing, but came into its own there. It first appeared as a powerful tool for organizing digital information in a software application designed in the late 1950s by H.L. Gelernter, in the course of his pioneering work on artificial intelligence. This application inspired a related one called Lisp, where recursive structure is the basic organizing principle not only for data but for the program itself. Years later the mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot developed his highly influential work on fractal curves as descriptions of nature based, partly, on the idea of recursive structure.

In architecture, the idea occurs in a much simpler way.

Many churches terminate in a chevet: As you enter such a church and walk towards the rear, you reach a half-circular space called the apse. You might find separate chapels opening off (or "radiating from") the walkway or ambulatory that follows the outside perimeter of the apse.

The chevet at the Abbey of Saint-Denis (1144) is a recursive structure. Its half-circular perimeter is defined not by a simple curved line but by a series of scoops, each a radiating chapel—and itself (roughly) a half-circle.

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In other words, this chevet is a semi-circle of semi-circles.

Many chevets have approximately this shape—in which each chapel "becomes a paraphrase of the apse itself," as John Summerson puts it. But Saint-Denis realizes the idea in its purest form—appropriately; Gothic architecture first emerged at Saint-Denis in this very chevet, and nearby parts of the building.

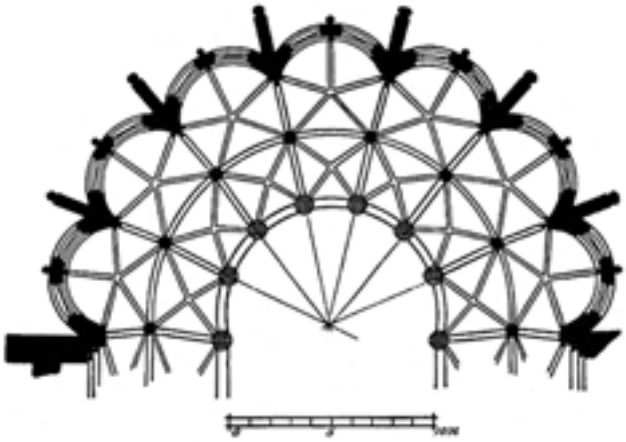
The inside of the west or front façade at Reims Cathedral, probably designed in the 1220s, is one of the most celebrated compositions in medieval art. In a large pointed arch a rose window is lodged at the top like a helium balloon. Within this large arch, and below the rose, is a second, smaller arch with a smaller rose lodged at its top. Thus, another recursive structure: an arch with a rose and, nested within it, a smaller arch with a smaller rose.

The west wall at Reims seems perfectly natural and is, but its recursive structure solves a tricky problem. It's often difficult to design a satisfactory composition based on two of something. (Try arranging exactly two flowers in a vase in a non-ridiculous-looking fashion. It can't be done.) The large majority of Gothic west façades have one rose or none, but recursive structure allows Reims to have two, and the effect is spectacular.

The Gothic cathedral of Chartres, begun in 1194, established the classical or "high Gothic" style and is, as such, one of history's most beautiful, influential, and surprising buildings. Remarkably enough, the Gothic cathedral of Bourges, begun in 1195, is in many ways just as beautiful and surprising, although radically different. Bourges inspired its own small group of important buildings, including Beauvais Cathedral and the east end of Le Mans.

Many classical Gothic cathedrals have a lower level or story (the aisles and arcades), a medium level (the triforium), and an upper level (the clerestory). Entering at the front of Chartres, and finding yourself in the nave, you see the large windows of the clerestory along the upper level of the nave walls to your left and right; beneath them, the triforium is a dark, windowless band; below the triforium, aisles at ground level on each side, separated from the nave by arcades. The aisle ceilings are much lower than the nave.

At Bourges, this design undergoes a startling recursive revision. Imagine the nave cut in half down the middle, front to back. Pull the two halves apart. Insert a whole second church in the gap, telescoping upward from the newly opened slot (or popping out like a triumphant slice of Gothic toast). Now there is a second clerestory at the very top; below that, a second triforium; below that, a second set of arcades, left and right—each tremendously tall because each spans the whole vertical space from the bottom of the new triforium to the floor. The result is a space that builds in a jubilant crescendo towards the center, from the low outer aisles to the tall inner aisles to the enormous volume of the nave in the middle.



Plan of the chevet at the Abbey of Saint-Denis

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

One of the most important aspects of mature Gothic design, and one that takes us right into the presence of the Gothic mind, is tracery—the thin, curvy, carved stone partitions that separate one window into many regions, or decorate blank wall surfaces. (The tracery within each window forms a structurally independent whole, separate from the window frame.) Tracery windows were a technical advance over earlier "composite windows," where a group of holes punched in stone panels yielded a set of related forms.

Tracery is central to Gothic because the medieval artist cared, above all, for design, not representation; his first goal was to create beautiful lines, surfaces, and volumes, not the painted or sculpted illusion of three-dimensional space. So medieval art is design art, and design begins with drawing—and tracery is pure drawing, abstract drawing representing nothing but itself; drawing in stone. Many later Gothic buildings use tracery not merely within windows and on wall surfaces but as a free-standing element of an architectural composition.

Recursion is basic to the art of tracery. Tracery was invented at Reims in around 1210 and used soon after at Amiens, the last (with Chartres and Reims) of the triumvirate on which the high Gothic style is based. To move from the characteristic tracery design of Reims to that of Amiens, simply add one level of recursion: at Reims, an arch containing a foiled circle supported on two smaller arches; at Amiens, an arch containing a foiled circle supported on two smaller arches, each containing a still-smaller foiled circle supported on still-smaller arches.

Exactly the same transition connects the windows of the apse and those of the nave in the chapel of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, dating from the late 1230s.

Tracery recursion can go deeper, too. The great east window at Lincoln Cathedral dates from around 1275. (Most English medieval churches terminate not in curved chevets but in flat eastern walls—ideal places for spectacular windows.) Within a large arch is a circle supported between two smaller arches. Within each smaller arch, a circle supported between two still-smaller arches. Within each

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still-smaller arch, a circle supported between two even-smaller arches. The result is an enormous "eight-light window," with a row of eight lancets forming the bottom register.

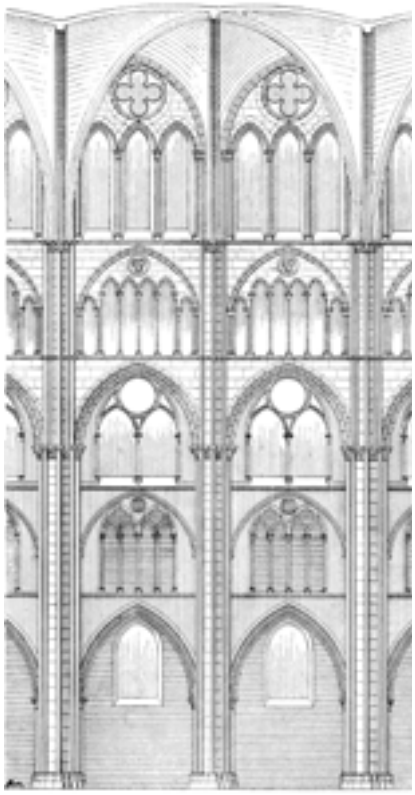
As reconstructed by Edmund Sharpe in his still-unrivaled (and unreprinted) study of English tracery (1849), the great east window at the ruins of Tintern Abbey used a similar, although somewhat more venturesome, design, yielding again an eight-light window. (This is Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey, by the way.) At Le Mans Cathedral is another recursive eight-light window, which plays on recursion not only in the arrangement of each window and sub-window but in the decorative devices in the upper registers.

The celebrated Percy tomb (circa 1240) at Beverley Minster near York is another example of three-level recursion. The carved stone canopy of the tomb centers on a large ogee arch—two S-curves joined at a point on top. Within this ogee arch, three smaller ones; within each smaller arch, another even smaller.

Gothic architecture is often playful, and Gothic designers played with recursion. The chapel windows at Amiens, echoed in the apse windows at the Sainte-Chapelle, culminate in a pyramid of trefoils—a trefoil is a circle surrounded by three equally spaced part-circles, or (occasionally) just three plain circles arranged like a clover leaf, each touching the other two. (Sainte-Chapelle, which dates from the 1240s, was the royal chapel of King Louis IX of France, otherwise Saint Louis.)

The trefoil itself often occurs in recursive versions, where each lobe has two-thirds of a smaller trefoil inscribed inside—as, for example, on the façade of Strasbourg Cathedral. But in the Amiens and Sainte Chapelle windows, three simple trefoils are arranged not *within* a larger trefoil but in the *shape* of one—as if the large trefoil had been used as a temporary frame to rack up the small ones like billiard balls.

There is an even closer approach to this theme at Lichfield Cathedral, unsurprisingly—for Amiens inspired Sainte-Chapelle, which introduced the "spherical triangle," which was copied at Westminster Abbey, which inspired Lichfield. The sides of a spherical triangle are gracefully convex, as if they had been drawn on a sphere. The Sainte-Chapelle, Westminster Abbey, and Lichfield all have spherical-triangular windows, but the most beautiful are at Lichfield (ca. 1265), where the triangle frames a trefoil of trefoils.



Bourges Cathedral eastern exposure, elevation of nave section

Recursion is especially important to English tracery of the Perpendicular period. The Perpendicular style, which emerged at London and Gloucester in the 1330s, is "late Gothic" and unique to England—a style that combines dazzling virtuosity (on occasion) with a certain decorum and prickly restraint. The relation between recursion and Perpendicular design is a story in itself, but a window from the church of St. Mary Magdalen in Launceston, Cornwall, is a simple example. It is an arch with an elongated diamond in the center flanked by two other diamonds. Superimposed is a Y-shaped mullion that creates two smaller arches—each with an elongated diamond on top, flanked by two others.

Recursive structure occurs in rose windows, too—and helps us see a distinction we might otherwise miss. The great western rose at Reims, for example, is a 12-petaled flower containing an inner 12-petaled flower within a medium-sized 24-petaled flower. It's tempting to approach in the same way some of the older roses that predate tracery: The north rose at Laon, for example, is an 8-petaled flower surrounded by smaller 8-petaled flowers; the west rose at Chartres is a 12-petaled flower surrounded by (again) smaller 8-petaled flowers.

When we look at these roses from inside, it's impossible not to see a resemblance between their festive, abstract flower shapes and recurring

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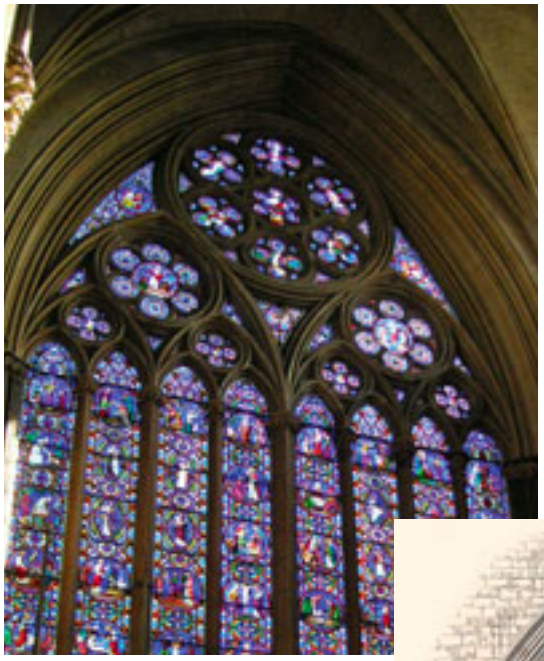


Recursive elements in the east window of Lincoln Cathedral

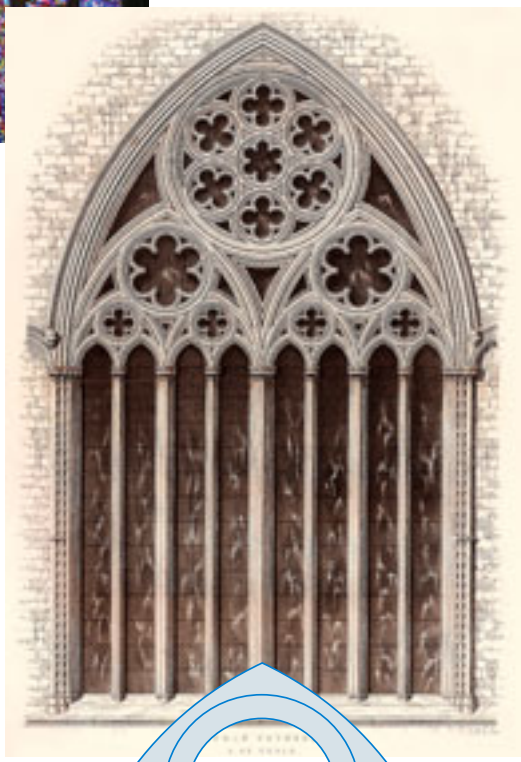
forms in the 20th-century cutouts of Henri Matisse. The resemblance is no fluke: The art of French Gothic glass is an art of color-design, of colored forms arranged on flat surfaces to represent stylized human beings and their paraphernalia, but with no attempt to suggest depth. French glass of the 12th and 13th centuries is as close to the 20th century fauves as Chartres is to Paris.

But these famous pre-tracery roses are not quite recursive: They are made of recurring forms, but the larger shapes do not *contain* the smaller ones; each smaller shape is distinct and set apart—which underlines a point that is often overlooked. It is difficult to accomplish, in the high-tech medium of tracery, an effect that is merely routine in any old 12th-century composite window: a design made of distinct shapes clearly separated by a neutral background—as in the north rose at Laon or the west at Chartres.

Tracery makes recursive compositions easy, but this older type of design becomes difficult. As tracery tended to displace the older-type window (among other things, tracery windows were cheaper) the loss to art was real. The composite roses at the top of each clerestory bay at Chartres, for example, might well be the most perfect roses ever designed. But by 1220 they were old-fashioned, technologically obsolete.

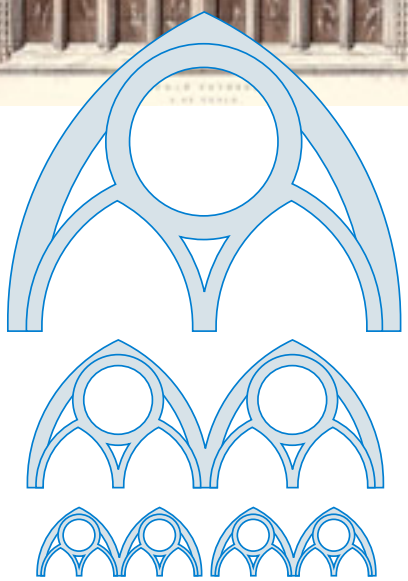
A final large-scale example: Some English Gothic churches have two transepts, a small eastern transept along with the main one. (Examples include Salisbury, Canterbury, Wells, Lincoln, Worcester and Southwell Cathedrals, as well as Beverley Minster.) The east end of a medieval church was ordinarily separated from the rest by a screen; the monks, canons, or other officiating priests wanted to chant the liturgy and celebrate mass in peace, shut off from nosy, noisy laymen. The extra transept turned the eastern part of the building into a priestly church in itself, with its own small transept.

This plan is inherently recursive: A large two-transept plan includes within it a smaller one-transept church. This recursive pattern yields the beautifully faceted, gem-like east end of Salisbury Cathedral. Salisbury's telescoping east end recalls the upward-telescoping structure of Bourges.



What do we gain by studying these many, varied instances of one basic design idea? The designers themselves had no idea of "recursive structure," at least not explicitly. But artists as a rule are too close to their own work to see any but the most obvious underlying themes or principles. A design impulse that appears in many forms in many artists' work is especially unlikely to be detected from the ground.

We need to soar years (or centuries) overhead and look at the era as a whole. When we do—when we notice such principles as recursive structure—the result is a clearer view of the spirit of the age, its artistic character, and the source of its vibrancy and integrity.



Recursive structure is by no means limited to Gothic. One of the most important developments in the whole range of post-Gothic architecture is Michelangelo's invention of the giant order, which vastly increased the expressive power of neo-classical design by introducing a kind of recursive structure. Tall columns or pilasters (the "giant order") span a deep vertical space containing stacked-up, shallower layers, each spanned by shorter columns or pilasters. And there is no neater demonstration of recursion than Brunelleschi's at Santo Spirito in Florence, where the domed, four-posted canopy over the altar at the crossing mirrors the domed crossing itself.

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Nave and signature inverted arch, Wells Cathedral

But the placid elegance of Santo Spirito gives us a hint about recursion's unique place in Gothic. As he mastered this radical new aesthetic vocabulary, the Gothic artist wanted his building to come alive, to throb with life. He wanted wave after wave of decoration to turn his building from a dead pile of stone to a live forest, with the sun screened through windows as colorful and intricate as a jungle canopy. Recursion is fundamental to Gothic art because it creates *ordered profusion*—profusion insofar as one can push the nest of form-within-form as deep as one likes; ordered and not chaotic insofar as the forms on each scale mirror the forms above and below. Recursion allows the Gothic artist to plant life in the smallest niche and tightest corner of his building, to push the level of decorative detail and aliveness to the finest scale his tools can reach.

We see recursion in Gothic buildings that are overgrown with sinuous, organic decoration built of abstract leaves, petals, and elegant compound curves, where large petals are built of smaller petals, which are built of smaller petals, which are built of still-smaller ones.

A Russian doll is recursive: open it and you find a smaller-scale copy inside. The Russian doll describes one of the most important gestures in Gothic (indeed, in medieval) architecture: an archway with a smaller archway nestled inside, and a smaller one within that.

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The nest can be two dozen layers deep. The "recursive archway" occurs in a strikingly pure and beautiful form at Exeter Cathedral, where it dates from the late 1200s. But it is ubiquitous in Gothic; the great portals of the high Gothic triad of Chartres, Reims, and Amiens, set with extraordinary sculpture, are "recursive archways." So are countless other doorways and arcade elements. Simpler recursive archways occur in the Romanesque and Norman architecture that preceded Gothic.

Cloisters at Salisbury Cathedral

Recursive tracery windows and archways are the basis of observations by Jean Bony and Erwin Panofsky. Like other medievalists, they are unfamiliar with the idea of recursion; are therefore forced back onto inadequate substitutes. But recursion helps sort their observations out.

Jean Bony comments on the clerestory windows at Saint-Denis. They are formally the same as the ones at Amiens which I have already described; but at Saint-Denis, the clerestory absorbs the triforium just below it. Instead of the dark windowless band of Chartres, this triforium has windows, and its rhythm (four beats to the measure) is created by the same vertical shafts that partition the clerestory windows.

In the triforium, moreover, each beat is split in two—yielding an eight light composition and three levels of recursion. Bony describes Saint-Denis as "composed of a series of similar forms progressively subdivided in increasing numbers and decreasing sizes."

Erwin Panofsky describes the same phenomenon as "this principle of progressive divisibility (or, to look at it the other way, multiplicability)"—a principle that "increasingly affected the entire edifice down to the smallest detail." This observation is far-reaching and important, but notice that "division" (Panofsky's word) suggests breaking into identical parts but doesn't apply to the nesting of one form within a larger version of itself. Panofsky's "principle of progressive divisiblity" is a fuzzy and roundabout way of saying "recursive structure."

Recursion allows us to connect Panofsky's observation with the west wall at Reims, the recursive trefoils of Strasbourg, and many other designs. It allows us to extend his observation to the nesting of small structures within larger ones. It allows us to connect it with Louis Grodecki's description of the Sainte Chapelle, where the shrine that once held sacred relics "was fashioned in the form of a tiny church." This shrine was intended for display on a canopied platform, itself shaped like a church, and the canopied platform stands at the front of the Chapelle, a full-sized church. Thus a church within a church within a church.

This is a common principle of Gothic art," Grodecki adds. Summerson cites a passage by Wilhelm Worringer (1927) that comes closer than any other to giving an accurate paraphrase of the idea of recursion and its importance:

> Gothic man seeks to lose himself not only in the infinity of the great, but also in the infinity of the small. . . . Every individual detail is, in itself, a world of bewildering activity and infinity, a world which repeats in miniature, but with the same means, the expression of the whole. . . . The crown of a pinnacle is a cathedral in miniature, and anyone who has sunk himself in the ingenious chaos of a tracery can here experience on a small scale the same thrill in logical formalism as he experiences in the building system as a whole.

Gothic buildings are alive as the sea is with waves, wavelets, little wavelets, littler wavelets. If you look inside Wells Cathedral, the greatest triumph of English Gothic and (perhaps) of Gothic altogether, you find large vaults underpinning the ceilings, small vaults under the stone canopy of the bishop's throne, smaller vaults under the canopies in the choir. Stone creatures scamper through carved foliage on the capitals of the nave piers, a magnificent branching canopy springs from the trunk-like central pillar of the chapter house, an intricate starburst (one star within a second within a third) clings to the ceiling of the sublime Lady Chapel—and a flock of statues roost in niches within the famously cliff-like front façade. In a chantry chapel in the nave the ceiling is carved with delicate outward-rippling fan vaults—and on the outside of this small enclosure, the carved stone cornice dissolves upwards into a lacy border, which dissipates gracefully into thin air.

And all this barely scratches the surface. There is far more detail than one can even see from any normal standpoint inside the building. The cathedral is like a shallow stretch of seawater where you see, at first, only sand

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Chapter house, Wells Cathedral

CORBIS

and water—until you become aware of innumerable tiny transparent fish whisking in and out, and small creatures crawling the bottom in an endless parade, an ordered profusion.

Ludwig Wittgenstein copied a verse from Longfellow into one of his notebooks:

> *In the elder days of art,*
> *Builders wrought with greatest care*
> *Each minute and unseen part,*
> *For the gods are everywhere.*

"This could serve me as a motto," he added. Replace "the gods are" with "the Lord is" and it could have served the builders of Wells, too. Wittgenstein himself greatly admired Ely Cathedral, where the sternly majestic Norman nave bursts into brilliant bloom in the Gothic lantern over the crossing. Here a tall, slender, light-flooded octagon emerges out of a larger, broader, ground-level octagon. The tall lantern is held so high on the shoulders of eight great, graceful arches that, from the ground, you can only catch a steeply foreshortened view inside.

The best Gothic buildings are alive as no other buildings ever have been or are likely to be. Recursive structure gives us a hint about how this amazing feat was accomplished.

In broader terms, recursion is as basic to art and nature as the noun phrase is to English. It is an idea that helps us parse and penetrate the world we see. Learning to understand images as we do language is one of the great unsolved problems of modern intellectual life. Computer science helps, because recursion helps. ♦

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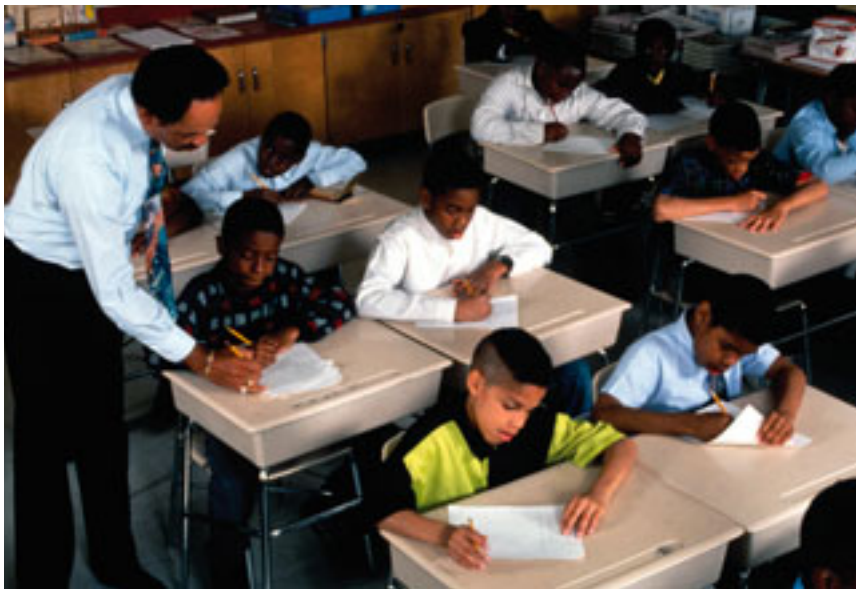
Pater Knows Best

The quest for success in inner-city schools.

BY JOEL SCHWARTZ



NEWSCOM

Towards the beginning of this important and provocative book, journalist David Whitman notes that "the premier civil rights issue of the day is arguably the [educational] achievement gap" that separates white and minority youths. For example, the average black 12th grader has the reading and writing skills of a typical white eighth grader; the average Hispanic 12th grader has the math skills of a typical white eighth grader. Clearly minorities will not approach economic equality with whites until minority youths have approached educational equality with white youths.

Sweating the Small Stuff
Inner-City Schools and the New Paternalism
by David Whitman
Fordham Institute, 386 pp., $16.95

The bulk of Whitman's book consists of case studies of six inner-city secondary schools that are succeeding—sometimes spectacularly—in raising the achievement levels of minority students. Three of the schools (the American Indian Public Charter School in Oakland; Amistad Academy in New Haven; and the KIPP [Knowledge is Power Program] Academy in the Bronx) are charter middle schools. One is a parochial high school: the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago. One is the nation's only urban public boarding school (grades seven through 12) for low-income students: the SEED School (Schools for Educational Evolution and Development) in Washington, D.C. And one is a traditional neighborhood public school (grades seven through 12): the University Park Campus School (UPCS) in Worcester.

Because UPCS—unlike the other five schools—is a traditional neighborhood school, its achievements are particularly impressive. UPCS opened its doors in 1997 with an entering class of 35 seventh graders, of whom almost half read at or below third-grade level. Three years later, not only did every one of those students pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System 10th grade tests—described by Whitman as "demanding"—in English and math, but more than 80 percent of them demonstrated that they had proficient or advanced skills in both English and math. By 2003 UPCS was the only public school in Massachusetts in which every 10th grader had passed the state tests in both English and math for two years running.

Furthermore, the school achieved these results despite the fact that it has an open admissions policy; that is to say, it accepts all comers and therefore cannot be accused of achieving its results through "creaming" (accepting promising students and rejecting others). Nor does UPCS achieve its results through attrition, with weaker students dropping out or transferring. Only one student dropped out of the school in its first 10 years of existence.

What accounts for the success achieved by UPCS and the five other schools discussed here? In addition to being small (the largest of these schools enrolls only 530 students—less than half the size of a typical urban public school), they are all paternalistic, in the sense that they tell the students how they should live. Not only do the schools teach rigorous courses that prepare students for college, but they also unapologetically attempt to mold character. They inculcate "middle-class virtues like diligence, politeness, cleanliness, and thrift because they believe . . . that students who are diligent and polite are more likely to succeed later in life." The schools' collective premise is that "programs that build self-discipline may be the royal road to building academic achievement."

The focus on self-discipline is particularly evident in the schools' efforts to curb disorder. In the view of the schools' founders, it is disorder, "not violence or poverty per se,

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[that] is the fatal undoing of urban schools in poor neighborhoods." For that reason the schools "devote inordinate attention to making sure that shirts are tucked in, bathrooms are kept clean, students speak politely, gang insignia are banned, trash is picked up, and youngsters are trained to follow teachers with their eyes during the course of class." The attention paid to details like these is captured in an Amistad Academy slogan—"We sweat the small stuff"—from which Whitman derives his title.

These schools exemplify a broader trend in American social policy, which has become increasingly paternalistic in recent years. Think, for example, of welfare reform, in which aid is extended to the poor—who formerly received aid as an entitlement—only if they meet a behavioral requirement by working. Case workers supervise welfare recipients to ensure that they meet this requirement.

As Whitman rightly notes, paternalistic policies have been and remain controversial; such policies contain "an element of moral arrogance, an assertion of superior competence. Paternalistic policies interfere with the freedom of individuals, and this interference is justified by the argument that the individuals will be better off as a result."

In addition, they are controversial because "they seek to change the lifestyles of the poor, immigrants, and minorities, rather than the lifestyles of middle-class and upper-class families." Nevertheless, with respect to welfare reform, education, or any other area of policy, Whitman rightly observes that the question should not be whether a policy is paternalistic; instead, we should ask whether "the paternalism in view [is] permissible or impermissible, good or bad."

In this context it is noteworthy that "most of the principals of the schools chronicled [by Whitman are] uneasy with having their schools described as paternalistic." One can surely understand their discomfort with the word, which could seem to imply that, in effect, the schools are bringing civilization to the heathen, substituting good "white" values for the bad "minority" ones with which the students came in.

For the record, as Whitman points out, the premise of today's paternalistic social policies is that, by and large, the poor themselves espouse "middle-class values." The problem, which the policies seek to remedy, is that by and large the poor also "lack the family and community support, cultural capital, and personal follow-through to live according to" these values. The problematic paternalism of the past was exemplified by late 19th-century boarding schools for Indians in which "teachers and principals constantly informed students that their ancestors were savages." The idea was that "we know what's best for you, and we'll make you do it." By contrast, the new paternalism—defended by Whitman—holds that "*you* know what's best for you, and we'll make you do it."

Yet at least in the context of paternalistic schools, as opposed, say, to paternalistic welfare programs, the discomfort with the word "paternalism" seems odd. We are, after all, talking about children (at any rate, adolescents) rather than adults. In the words of education blogger Matthew Tabor, "Some of us—yes, even some younger than 100—think of education as teaching kids how to live. It's really that simple." It may be wrong to be parental—a preferable term to "paternal," since it avoids the implication that it is only father rather than mother who knows best—to adults, but it is hard to see how, as a matter of principle, it can be wrong to be parental to kids.

Whitman notes that these schools are "highly prescriptive institutions that often serve *in loco parentis*." Thus the paternalistic schools neither demand nor expect much involvement from the actual parents of their students. Their leaders "anticipate that inner-city parents will not be involved to the same degree as they would at, say, a high-performing suburban school." Instead, the schools assume that "minority parents want to do the right thing but often don't have the time or resources to keep their children from being dragged down by an unhealthy street culture." The schools therefore take "on a piece of the parent's role, . . . reinforc[ing] middle-class mores by nurturing a work ethic and culture of achievement." The major expectation is that parents will "steer their children through the door . . . and then ensur[e] that their children get to school on time and do their homework."

The schools' apparent success in acting *in loco parentis* raises an important point, which perhaps Whitman could have discussed more extensively. The schools could seem to refute, or at least to question a major premise of, a work that has influenced conservative (and not only conservative) educational thought for generations: the 1966 Coleman Report, one of whose major findings was that schools are generally unable to overcome discrepancies between the family backgrounds of different students. Students who—thanks to their families—come to school well prepared to learn do better than students who come to school poorly prepared, and schools can do little about this.

(To be sure, Coleman also found that a second important determinant of a student's academic success is his sense of being able to control his destiny. Arguably, it is precisely this belief—that a student's actions can significantly control his fate—that is conveyed by the moral instruction of the paternalistic schools.)

In any event, through his portrait of these schools Whitman marshals considerable evidence refuting the belief—to be found in some portions of the Coleman Report, and in Charles Murray's recent book about education—that "demography [is] destiny." Although Whitman's book is more practical than theoretical, it might usefully have considered the implications of the paternalistic schools for Coleman's and Murray's respective understandings of the limits of formal education.

As Whitman notes, all six of these schools are attempting to replicate themselves. Nevertheless, at the moment, only a small percentage of American inner-city schools can be

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considered paternalistic. Nor is Whitman very optimistic that the percentage can be greatly increased in the foreseeable future. He writes:

> The three legs of the education establishment tripod—teacher unions, education schools, and the district bureaucracy—are all unlikely to embrace key elements that make paternalistic schools work. Requiring teachers to work longer days and years [as the paternalistic schools do] would violate union contracts. So would allowing principals to handpick teachers (who may or may not be certified), evaluate and pay instructors based on their effectiveness, and fire those who are not successful in the classroom. Frequent testing, teacher-directed instruction, and flunking students who fail to meet academic standards are all unpopular at schools of education [where the ideas of progressive education continue to hold sway]. District bureaucrats, meanwhile, are loath to grant individual schools the freedom to do things differently.

Still, even if paternalistic schools are unlikely to be replicated widely, one can reasonably suppose that—because of the schools' attempts at self-replication, as well as their remarkable achievements—their numbers will increase in the next few years. The schools' success points to the weakness of progressive education and the strength of traditional moral education. As Whitman notes, a reigning dogma of progressive education holds that "adolescents . . . should be granted as much freedom as possible to evolve naturally. Instead, it appears that many poor adolescents benefit from being told exactly what to learn and how to conduct themselves in middle-class society."

Although there is clearly something conservative about the schools' emphasis on inculcating traditional middle-class virtues, and their disdain for progressive education, the schools do not represent anything like an unalloyed triumph of conservatism over liberalism. For one thing, their founders "tend to be young, white, political liberals" and the schools themselves "promote not only traditional virtues but also social activism." (Specifically, four of the schools encourage "community involvement in progressive causes.") In addition, as Whitman notes, the success of the schools could seem to point not only to the irrelevance of a staple liberal policy recommendation—"pushing greater resources into urban schools"—but also to the irrelevance of a staple conservative policy: "providing low-income families with vouchers to attend private and religious schools."

That said, conservatives have joined, and emphatically should join, liberals like Hillary Clinton and John Edwards in praising paternalistic schools. Because of the obstacles that Whitman acknowledges, paternalistic schools may turn out not to be the wave of the future—at least to the extent that we could wish. Nevertheless, Whitman convincingly argues that they ought to be. ♦

Expiration Date

Why and how the human shelf life grows longer.

BY LILA DE TANTILLO

If, for many in modern society, the fear of death may be considered to be among the most deep-seated and universal of emotions, fear of growing old may be catching right up to it. Few look forward to finding themselves weak or wrinkled, as happens to those who live long enough, and perhaps destitute and alone, as happens to many.

For some, growing old may seem almost as bad, or worse, than the alternative; but throughout the developed world, it's an increasingly likely possibility. Life expectancy in the United States increased more than 30 years between 1900 and 2000. Individuals of all ages must become accustomed to living in a world where an ever-expanding segment of the populace is of advanced age. Here, Dr. Robert Butler explores this demographic transformation and its effect on the economy, politics, medicine, and our way of life. There is hardly anyone more qualified to do so: Dr. Butler, a gerontologist and psychiatrist by training, is the founding director of the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health, and coined the term "ageism." His Pulitzer Prize-winning *Why Survive?* (1975) brought needed attention to the challenges then faced by older people.

The Longevity Revolution
The Benefits and Challenges of Living a Long Life
by Robert N. Butler, M.D.
Public Affairs, 608 pp., $30

With his additional 30 years' perspective, you might expect that Butler's first-hand experience of having himself aged, combined with his professional accomplishments, would yield some profound insights on a subject that has only grown in importance. Unfortunately for readers, he squanders his authority by lapsing into a recap of standard left-of-center talking points.

The demographic challenges described here—inadequacy of medical care, especially for the socioeconomically disadvantaged; the difficulties faced by older people who want to work; the need for more research on age-related diseases such as Alzheimer's and other dementias—are real enough. But Butler's work is ultimately depressing not for its enumeration of the actual problems but for the impractical, not to say utopian, nature of his solutions. They almost invariably boil down to

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more money for government agencies, more bureaucrats, and lots more funding for well-intentioned international organizations. Reviewing his proposals is a bit like reading a travel brochure for a lovely destination one couldn't possibly afford: You are at once titillated by the possibilities, but grimly resigned to reality.

Prime example: Butler advocates a version of nationalized health care that would be accomplished by gradually reducing the qualifying age of Medicare (65) until it encompassed everybody. Never mind that Medicare is fraught with waste, fraud, and abuse. (Here in South Florida a married couple just pled guilty to submitting $420 *million* in false claims for medical equipment; they'll get time behind bars, but the vast majority of the money is unrecoverable and the damage done by this mom-and-pop operation is puny compared to the feats of more sophisticated swindlers.) Butler offers no tangible advice on how to clean up the existing mess of this entitlement before advocating a massive expansion. His views on Social Security are a bit more realistic, with an acknowledgment that generations who expect to live longer have no choice but to work longer and assume more personal responsibility for their health and finances. But once again, he lapses into his refrain about the superiority of government programs to privatization.

Butler is a leading expert on aging, so why is he writing about day care and deforestation? He glosses over euthanasia—a longevity and age discrimination issue if ever there was one!—and writes more about the greenhouse effect and the ozone layer. Moreover, according to Butler, "The economic foundation for the modern Western welfare state was laid, and it, in turn, contributed to longevity. It is sheer foolishness to imagine that we can extend life or sustain complex modern societies without substantial government participation."

But by interpreting the theme of longevity as anything tangentially having to do with being alive, as Butler apparently does, he strays into issues where the extent of his knowledge seems to be standard leftwing boilerplate. He lays out a neo-Malthusian worldview that advocates voluntary population reduction, and in some sort of exchange, longer life-years per person. He argues that such depopulation would bring about "a better balance between humanity and nature" and "make way for the new age wave and enhance the quality and length of life." It is more than a little troubling to imagine a perspective that favors the extension of life on the condition that there be fewer individuals around to enjoy it!

'The Fountain of Youth' (1546) by Lucas Cranach

DIRECTMEDIA / THE YORCK PROJECT

These shortcomings perform a serious disservice to the bulk of the book. Butler's unparalleled expertise yields some ingenious ideas and, occasionally, provocative solutions for dealing with the inexorable passage of time. *The Longevity Revolution* is at its best when it explores tough scientific questions dealing with the life span—whether humans have a built-in expiration date, and if so, how it can be surmounted—and his explanation of humanity's history, in terms of longevity, as well as his discussion of the potential for extending human life spans, are as compelling as any work of science fiction.

When Butler actually describes specific uses for funds—as opposed to simply advocating blank checks directed to the coffers of pet institutions—some proposals are worth contemplating. For example, he offers a thoughtful discussion of the need to support older persons in their quest to be productive members of society, whether for pay or as volunteers, and explicit policy shifts for the Food and Drug Administration—such as cracking down on unregulated "dietary supplements" and conducting additional post-marketing research on approved drugs—are eminently reasonable. Butler also takes on the obesity crisis—20 percent of health dollars now go to diabetes—and warns that, if current trends are not reversed, American life expectancy will actually decrease—and for the first time in American history, children may not live as long as their parents.

Alas, such gems are too often diluted in the text, or hiding among the proposals for handouts. (Did he *really* just suggest a tax on international plane fares to support the United Nations?) If only Butler had put aside his fantasies of importing the European welfare state—"at its finest, it has the taxing and spending power to look after the welfare of both the nation and its citizens"—and shared his expertise on what it means to grow old—physically, emotionally, and yes, economically—without reflexively promoting the creation of yet another federal agency, this could have been a fascinating book. ♦

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His Masters' Voices

The British Library presents the sound of writers speaking. **BY JAMIE JAMES**

The British Library has just released an anthology of recorded interviews with famous 20th-century American and British writers that bears a telling title: "The Spoken Word." As much as the authors here carry on about the perennial writerly subjects—getting paid, obtuse critics, and, especially, other writers—time and again they return to the mysterious power of words themselves.

Virginia Woolf, speaking in a spectral drawing-room drawl, fancifully endows words with lives of their own: "Words, English words, are full of echoes, memories, associations naturally," she declares. "They've been out and about on people's lips, in their houses, in the streets, in the fields, for so many centuries." She imagines words as being altered by "famous marriages in the past," familiar usages of words that tint and flavor them forever after. Yet by 1962 Doris Lessing would lament that she had become "preoccupied by a feeling that words are too thin for our experience."

Most of the recordings, divided into two sets by nationality, are interviews drawn from the archives of the BBC, but not all; a few of the earlier tracks (including Virginia Woolf's) are prepared statements or speeches. Addressing a group of visiting Canadian authors in London, a chipper Rudyard Kipling proclaims, "It is only words, nothing but words that live to show the present—how men lived, how men worked and thought in the past. And we do not know whose words they will be."

"The Spoken Word" is a well-considered effort to populate a pantheon for the 20th century, within the limits of who was willing to sit down in front of a microphone—and, no doubt, whose heirs were willing to grant permission to use the recordings. It would be misleading to enumerate a list of the most famous authors who speak on these CDs, for some of the most interesting listening comes from minor writers. Baroness Orczy, the Hungarian-born author of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, a royalist swashbuckler in the style of Dumas *père*, addresses a preposterous, fey monologue to her character, "the inimitable, the exquisite, the dashing and gallant Scarlet Pimpernel, who came to me on that dreary, dismal afternoon in November, out of the London fog and the fumes of the Underground railway."

The oldest recording captures the voice of Arthur Conan Doyle, sounding very much like Dr. Watson in a blunt, plain-spoken account of how he created Sherlock Holmes. The last-born author is the playwright Joe Orton who says, in an interview broadcast just days before he was murdered, "A really good playwright's career is very short." There are a few thrilling dramatic passages: F. Scott Fitzgerald reciting speeches from *Othello*, Eugene O'Neill reading from *A Long Day's Journey into Night* in a gloomy growl.

In the spontaneous interviews that dominate the discs, it's more surprising than it ought to be how much writers sound like their books. No one who has read a page of Gertrude Stein could fail to identify her as the speaker here, denying that her writing style is difficult: "Everybody has their own English and it is only a matter of anybody getting used to an English, anybody's English, and then it's all right." Vladimir Nabokov rattles away in complex, ornate, perfect sentences, couched in the exquisite mock-heroic irony of his best novels. He describes the initial joy of "unpacking the radiant, beautiful, plump advance copy" of a new book, which eventually ripens to "a kind of amused tenderness, as a man regards not his son, but rather the young wife of his son."

One of the principal virtues of "The Spoken Word" is that the excerpts are long enough (most are over 5 minutes, and many are 10 minutes or longer) to give a vivid sense of the writer's personality. Eudora Welty at first seems shy and self-effacing, but when she twice turns the reviewer's question back on him, asking him his own opinion, the listener realizes that she isn't lacking in self-confidence at all but is rather an indefatigable student of humanity: She really wants to know what he thinks. Nancy Mitford is exasperating when she trills in a plumy voice, "Nobody knows less about etiquette and social behavior than I do," but the false modesty is quickly softened by a girlish giggle.

What communicates powerfully in nearly every selection is the principled seriousness of these writers. They're not trying to make themselves sound interesting; they are struggling to express ideas—truths—that matter to them. That doesn't mean that they're pompous or ponderous—though a few are, particularly a turgid, grumpy Evelyn Waugh. When the earnest interviewer asks Tennessee Williams what the moral message of his plays is, after a moment's thought he has an answer, delivered with a chuckle: "The moral message of my plays is that people shouldn't be so damn beastly to each other."

A few of the writers hide behind masses of words and reveal little of themselves, but some of the most eloquent and self-revealing responses are those of four words. When the interviewer asks Nabokov, "Could you say how important your wife has been as a collaborator?" he gallantly replies, "No, I could not." Tennessee Williams, asked if he likes working in the movies, answers, "No, I hate it." And when the interviewer enquires of Gore Vidal whether there is anything in modern society that gives him hope, he responds, with his usual good cheer, "No, nothing at all." ♦

Jamie James is the author of The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge.

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Suburban 'Titanic'

What happens when satire is mistaken for tragedy.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Richard Yates's novel *Revolutionary Road* is a work in disguise. It takes the form of a domestic tragedy, but it is actually a savage satire. There really isn't anything quite like it in the canon of modern American fiction. Indeed, it is so singular a performance that Yates, who never wrote anything one-fiftieth as good after it, may not really have understood himself what he was up to when he wrote it.

Revolutionary Road
Directed by Sam Mendes

What makes *Revolutionary Road* so memorable is not its story of a dissatisfied young couple, the Wheelers, who hatch a disastrous escape plan from the leafy suburbs of New York where, they are certain, the life is being choked out of them. After all, there were dozens of works of popular sociology, novels, and stories written in the 1950s about the deadening conformity of upper-middle-class American life; in 1964 Betty Friedan took those same ideas, already worn into scuffed clichés, and cobbled them into *The Feminine Mystique*.

No, what gives *Revolutionary Road* its unforgettable resonance is Yates's fundamental dismissal of the grievances of his characters. Whatever woes they have are entirely of their own making. The Wheelers are fools to believe that their lives are so horrid when they and the marriage they have contrived together are the only really horrid things in it. And they are fools to believe they are better than the people around them, a view that derives directly from those novels and works of sociology *Revolutionary Road* is subtly parodying in its portrait of the Wheelers.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

As Adelle Waldman put it in a brilliant piece that ran on the *New Republic*'s web site, "Yates isn't seduced by his characters' emotions, no matter how earnestly experienced; he lays bare the roiling pools of vanity and narcissism that underlie them."

The unpleasant new film version of *Revolutionary Road* is both remarkably faithful to and a complete hash of the novel. Screenwriter Justin Haythe has done a splendid job of compressing the incidents and events of the novel into a two-hour script, and the work of director Sam Mendes is tasteful and careful. But they have no idea what the novel is about. They think *Revolutionary Road* is one of the 1950s conformity books of which it is actually a critique.

And so they take the Wheelers at face value—or rather, they take April Wheeler (Kate Winslet) at face value. In the movie, April is entirely justified in her conviction that she is being stifled in the suburbs. Her dream of escape to Paris would, Mendes and Haythe seem to think, really free her from bourgeois bondage. The only real crime on display in *Revolutionary Road* is that Frank Wheeler (Leonardo DiCaprio) doesn't understand how much his wife needs to flee and what will happen to her and to him if she doesn't get it.

This is a fatal misreading of April, one of the most interesting monsters in American fiction—a dynamically sexual, intelligent, and sharp-tongued woman whose odd indifference causes men to love her and causes her to feel no love for them or her children or much of anything. Her soullessness is apparent in the novel well before they move to the suburbs. Yates views her with pitiless eyes; the movie does little but pity her.

The flaw in the film's conception of April is matched by Winslet's performance, which is so shockingly bad, so completely dreadful, that she has managed to convince many sensible people she is great in it. Have you heard of "less is more"? For Winslet, there is no "less," and "more" is only the beginning. There isn't a moment in the course of *Revolutionary Road* when Winslet isn't acting, *acting*, acting, **acting**, ***acting***! She pulls at cigarettes, she trembles, she expresses dissatisfaction by smoking and trembling. She yells and screams and cries. When she is quiet, it is even worse; she turns into a Stepford wife, as vacant-eyed as a zombie.

What's odd about Winslet's work here is that two years ago she played another dissatisfied suburban housewife in the immensely superior *Little Children*, and her performance in that film was spectacular. In *Little Children*, Winslet seemed aware that her character had summoned most of her trouble upon herself. But the mid-1950s setting of *Revolutionary Road* has caused this wonderful actress to play April Wheeler not as an individual but as a type, as her tribute to Friedan's miserable housewife suffering from "the problem that has no name." Friedan produced a caricature, and so does Winslet.

DiCaprio is technically a very fine actor, but in this, his first real effort at playing a husband and father, he is undone by his inability to imagine what a 30-year-old man of the 1950s might actually have been like. For one thing, such a man would have worked hard at eliminating any trace of the high and breathy tone of a teenager in his voice, which DiCaprio still retains. I hate to put it this way, but he has left me no choice: When, on at least two occasions in the course of the movie, DiCaprio actually weeps with rage, he cries like a girl.

Without the dual effect of Yates's portrait of an unhappy marriage made more unhappy by excuses and fantasies generated by popular culture, *Revolutionary Road* is simply an off-putting portrait of marital bile generated by two uninteresting people. It wants to be raw, but is instead just a pile of gristle. ♦

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The New York Times Company said Monday that it had reached an agreement with Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim Helú for a $250 million loan intended to help the newspaper company finance its businesses. The paper's chief financial officer said Mr Slim's interest is purely financial.

—News Item

Parody

Obama, The Age of Obama. Obama! Obama! Harmony and understanding, sympathy and trust abounding....

DAY, JANUARY 21, 2009 — ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

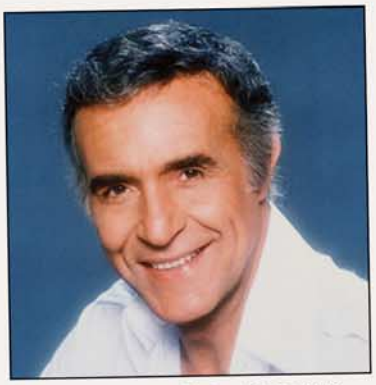
OBAMA TAKES OATH AS NATION GRIEVES FOR MONTALBAN

Tears for First African-American President, Tears in Memory of 'Fine Corinthian Leather'

By MARIA AGUSTINA ROBLES

CIUDAD WASHINGTON—It was supposed to be a celebration of North America's developing democracy, a happy ceremony in a festive District of Columbia for Latinos, Latinas, and North Americans of all races, creeds, and colors, as former Sen. Barack H. Obama, D-Illinois, was inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States, the 33rd since the annexation of Texas.

But the tears of joy shed in the streets of North America's quaint provincial capital were matched by the tears of tens of millions of mourners all across the Western Hemisphere, still reeling from the shock of the death, just six days earlier, of Ricardo Montalbán, the Mexican-born star of North American stage, screen, radio, and television.



Ricardo Montalbán, 1920-2009

As North American peasants danced across the paved streets of the District of Columbia, dressed in their lavish "hip-hop" costumes, with chains, gold jewelry, and tribal insignia, or stood patiently in their native quilt/windbreakers and colorful parkas, listening to Obama's oration and the loud incantations of the three high priests, an undertone of sadness pervaded the quadrennial custom.

"Our hearts are full, but they are breaking, too," said one elderly woman, whose tear-stained eyes were hidden by special paint and oversized sunglasses. A young man, adjusting his sombrero and ammunition belt, gestured toward the sacred Potomac River and the burial ground in Arlington where many chiefs and tribal elders are interred.

"If they do not make a place for the magnificent Montalbán in that city of the dead across the water," he declared, "then this whole ceremony you see here today will have no meaning for my people."

Montalbán, 88, was ending his career as national spokesman for the Chrysler Cordoba when a young Chicago lawyer and community organizer named Barack Obama strode onto the national

the weekly Standard
February 2, 2009

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